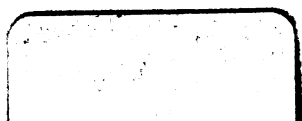


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T H E M Y S T E R I E S

A SEQUEL TO

“ ERNEST MALTRAVERS.”

BY THE

AUTHOR OF “ PELHAM,” “ RIENZI,” “ THE STUDENT,”
&c., &c.

ΘΑΡΡΩ ΤΩ ΔΙΟΙΚΟΤΝΤΙ .

M. ANTONIN, lib. vi. sec. 8.

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BOOK THE FOURTH
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VOL. II.

B

CHAPTER V.

“ See how the skilful lover spreads his toils.”

STILLINGFLEET.

THE party had not long returned to the Rectory, and the Admiral's carriage was ordered, when Lord Vargrave made his appearance. He descanted with gay good humour on his long drive—the bad roads—and his disappointment at the *contre-temps* that awaited him; then, drawing aside Colonel Legard, who seemed unusually silent and abstracted, he said to him—

“ My dear Colonel, my visit this morning was rather to you than to Doltimore. I con-

fess that I should like to see your abilities enlisted on the side of the Government ; and knowing that the post of Storekeeper to the Ordnance will be vacant in a day or two by the promotion of Mr. —, I wrote to secure the refusal—to-day's post brings me the answer. I offer the place to you ; and I trust, before long, to procure you also a seat in Parliament. But you must start for London immediately."

A week ago, and Legard's utmost ambition would have been amply gratified by this post ; he now hesitated.

" My dear Lord," said he, " I cannot say how grateful I feel for your kindness ; but—but —"

" Enough : no thanks, my dear Legard. Can you go to town to-morrow ?

" Indeed," said Legard, " I fear not ; I must consult my uncle."

" I can answer for him ; I sounded him before I wrote—reflect ! You are not rich,

my dear Legard; it is an excellent opening: a seat in Parliament, too! Why, what *can* be your reason for hesitation?"

There was something meaning and inquisitive in the tone of voice in which this question was put, that brought the colour to the Colonel's cheek. He knew not well what to reply; and he began, too, to think that he ought not to refuse the appointment. Nay, would his uncle, on whom he was dependent, consent to such a refusal? Lord Vargrave saw the irresolution, and proceeded. He spent ten minutes in combating every scruple—every objection; he placed all the advantages of the post—real or imaginary—in every conceivable point of view before the Colonel's eyes; he sought to flatter—to wheedle—to coax—to weary him into accepting it: and he at length partially succeeded. The Colonel petitioned for three days' consideration, which Vargrave reluctantly acceded to; and Legard then stepped into his uncle's car-

riage, with the air rather of a martyr than a maiden placeman.

“Aha!” said Vargrave, chuckling to himself as he took a turn in the grounds, “I have got rid of that handsome knave; and now I shall have Evelyn all to myself!”

CHAPTER VI.

"I am forfeited to eternal disgrace if you do not commiserate."

* * * * *

"Go to, then, raise—recover."

BEN JONSON, *Poetaster*.

THE next morning Admiral Legard and his nephew were conversing in the little cabin consecrated by the name of the Admiral's "own room."

"Yes," said the veteran, "it would be moonshine and madness not to accept Vargrave's offer; though one can see through such a millstone as that with half an eye. His Lordship

✱

is jealous of such a fine, handsome young fellow as you are—and very justly. But as long as he is under the same roof with Miss Cameron, you would have no opportunity to pay your court; when he goes, you can always manage to be in her neighbourhood; and then, you know—puppy that you are—her business will be very soon settled.” And the Admiral eyed the handsome Colonel with grim fondness.

Legard sighed.

“Have you any commands at ——?” said he; “I am just going to canter over there before Doltimore is up.”

“Sad lazy dog, your friend.”

“I shall be back by twelve.”

“What are you going to —— for?”

“Brookes, the farrier, has a little spaniel—King Charles’s breed. Miss Cameron is fond of dogs. I can send it to her, with my compliments—it will be a sort of leave-taking.”

“Sly rogue; ha, ha, ha!—d——d sly; ha,

ha!" and the Admiral punched the slender waist of his nephew, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Good bye! Sir."

"Stop, George; I forgot to ask you a question: you never told me you knew Mr. Maltravers. Why don't you cultivate his acquaintance?"

"We met at Venice accidentally. I did not know his name then; he left just as I arrived. As you say, I ought to cultivate his acquaintance."

"Fine character!"

"Very!" said Legard with energy, as he abruptly quitted the room.

George Legard was an orphan. His father—the Admiral's elder brother—had been a spendthrift man of fashion, with a tolerably large unentailed estate. He married a Duke's daughter without a sixpence. Estates are troublesome—Mr. Legard's was sold. On the purchase-money the happy pair lived for

some years in great comfort, when Mr. Legard died of a brain fever; and his disconsolate widow found herself alone in the world, with a beautiful little curly-headed boy, and an annuity of one thousand a-year, for which her settlement had been exchanged—all the rest of the fortune was gone; a discovery not made till Mr. Legard's death. Lady Louisa did not long survive the loss of her husband and her station in society: her income, of course, died with herself. Her only child was brought up in the house of his grandfather, the Duke, till he was of age to hold the office of King's page; thence, as is customary, he was promoted to a commission in the Guards. To the munificent emoluments of his pay, the ducal family liberally added an allowance of two hundred a-year; upon which income Cornet Legard contrived to get very handsomely in debt. The extraordinary beauty of his person, his connexions, and his manners, obtained him all the celebrity that fashion can bestow: but

poverty is a bad thing. Luckily, at this time, his uncle, the Admiral, returned from sea, to settle for the rest of his life in England.

Hitherto the Admiral had taken no notice of George. He himself had married a merchant's daughter with a fair portion; and had been blessed with two children, who monopolized all his affection. But there seemed some mortality in the Legard family: in one year after returning to England and settling in B——shire, the Admiral found himself wifeless and childless. He then turned to his orphan nephew; and soon became fonder of him than he had ever been of his own children. The Admiral, though in easy circumstances, was not wealthy; nevertheless, he advanced the money requisite for George's rise in the army, and doubled the allowance bestowed by the Duke. His Grace heard of this generosity; and discovered that he himself had a very large family growing up; that the Marquis was going to be married and re-

quired an increase of income ; that he had already behaved most handsomely to his nephew ; and the result of this discovery was, that the Duke withdrew the two hundred a-year. Legard, however, who looked on his uncle as an exhaustless mine, went on breaking hearts and making debts—till one morning he woke in the Bench. The Admiral was hastily summoned to London. He arrived ; payed off the duns—a kindness which seriously embarrassed him—swore, scolded, and cried ; and finally insisted that Legard should give up that d—d coxcomb regiment, in which he was now Captain, retire on half-pay, and learn economy and a change of habits on the Continent.

The Admiral, a rough but good-natured man on the whole, had two or three little peculiarities. In the first place, he piqued himself on a sort of John Bull independence ; was a bit of a Radical (a strange anomaly in an Admiral)—which was owing, perhaps, to two or three young Lords having been put over his head in

the earlier part of his career ; and he made it a point with his nephew (of whom he was jealous) to break with those fine grand connexions, who plunged him into a sea of extravagance, and then never threw him a rope to save him from drowning.

In the second place, without being stingy, the Admiral had a good deal of economy in his disposition. He was not a man to allow his nephew to ruin him. He had an extraordinary old-fashioned horror of gambling—a polite habit of George's ;—and he declared, positively, that his nephew must, while a bachelor, learn to live upon seven hundred a-year. Thirdly, the Admiral could be a very stern, stubborn, passionate old brute ; and when he coolly told George, “Harkye, you young puppy, if you get into debt again—if you exceed the very handsome allowance I make you—I shall just cut you off with a shilling.”—George was fully aware that his uncle was one who would rigidly keep his word.

However, it was something to be out of debt and one of the handsomest men of his age ; and George Legard—whose rank in the Guards made him a Colonel in the line—left England tolerably contented with the state of affairs.

Despite the foibles of his youth, George Legard had many high and generous qualities. Society had done its best to spoil a fine and candid disposition, with abilities far above mediocrity ; but society had only partially succeeded. Still, unhappily, dissipation had grown a habit with him ; and all his talents were of a nature that brought a ready return. At his age, it was but natural that the praise of *salons* should retain all its sweetness.

In addition to those qualities which please the softer sex, Legard was a good whist-player—superb at billiards—famous as a shot—unrivalled as a horseman—in fact, an accomplished man, “ who did everything so devilish well ! ” These accomplishments did not stand

him in much stead in Italy ; and though with reluctance and remorse, he took again to gambling—he really *had* nothing else to do.

In Venice there was, one year, established a society, somewhat on the principle of the *Salon* at Paris. Some rich Venetians belonged to it ; but it was chiefly for the convenience of foreigners—French, English, and Austrians. Here there was select gaming in one room ; while another apartment served the purposes of a club. Many who never played belonged to this society ; but still they were not the habitués.

Legard played : he won at first—then he lost—then he won again : it was a pleasant excitement. One night, after winning largely at *roulette*, he sat down to play *écarté* with a Frenchman of high rank. Legard played well at this, as at all scientific games : he thought he should make a fortune out of the Frenchman. The game excited much interest ; the crowd gathered round the table ;

bets ran high; the vanity of Legard, as well as his interest, was implicated in the conflict. It was soon evident that the Frenchman played as well as the Englishman. The stakes, at first tolerably high, were doubled. Legard betted freely—cards went against him: he lost much—lost all he had—lost more than he had—lost several hundreds, which he promised to pay the next morning. The table was broken up—the spectators separated. Amongst the latter had been one Englishman, introduced into the club for the first time that night. He had neither played nor betted; but had observed the game with a quiet and watchful interest. This Englishman lodged at the same hotel as Legard. He was at Venice only for a day: the promised sight of a file of English newspapers had drawn him to the club; the general excitement around had attracted him to the table; and, once there, the spectacle of human emotions exercised its customary charm.

On ascending the stairs that conducted to his apartment, the Englishman heard a deep groan in a room, the door of which was ajar. He paused—the sound was repeated; he gently pushed open the door, and saw Legard seated by a table, while a glass on the opposite wall reflected his working and convulsed countenance; with his hands trembling visibly, as they took a brace of pistols from the case.

The Englishman recognised the loser at the club; and at once divined the act that his madness, or his despair, dictated. Legard twice took up one of the pistols, and twice laid it down irresolute; the third time, he rose with a start, raised the weapon to his head; and the next moment it was wrenched from his grasp!

“Sit down, Sir!” said the stranger, in a loud and commanding voice.

Legard, astonished and abashed, sunk once more into his seat, and stared sullenly and half unconsciously at his countryman.

“ You have lost your money,” said the Englishman, after calmly replacing the pistols in their case, which he locked, putting the key into his pocket; “ and that is misfortune enough for one night. If you had won, and ruined your opponent, you would be excessively happy, and go to bed, thinking Good Luck (which is the representative of Providence) watched over you. For my part, I think you ought to be very thankful that you are not the winner.”

“ Sir,” said Legard, recovering from his surprise, and beginning to feel resentment, “ I do not understand this intrusion in my apartments. You have saved me, it is true, from death—but life is a worse curse.”

“ Young man—No!—Moments in life are agony, but life itself is a blessing. Life is a mystery that defies all calculation. You can never say ‘ To-day is wretched, therefore to-morrow must be the same!’ And for the loss of a little gold, you, in the full vigour of youth,

with all the future before you, will dare to rush into the chances of eternity! You, who have never perhaps thought what eternity is! Yet" (added the stranger, in a soft and a melancholy voice) "you are young and beautiful—perhaps the pride and hope of others! Have you no tie—no affection—no kindred—are you lord of yourself?"

Legard was moved by the tone of the stranger, as well as by the words.

"It is not the loss of money," said he, gloomily, "it is the loss of honour.—To-morrow I must go forth a shunned and despised man—I, a gentleman and a soldier!—They may insult me—and I have no reply!"

The Englishman seemed to muse, for his brow lowered, and he made no answer. Legard threw himself back, overcome with his own excitement, and wept like a child. The stranger, who imagined himself above the indulgence of emotion—(vain man!)—woke from his reverie at this burst of passion. He

gazed at first (I grieve to write) with a curl of the haughty lip that had in it contempt; but it passed quickly away; and the hard man remembered that he too had been young and weak, and his own errors greater perhaps than the one he had ventured to despise. He walked to and fro the room, still without speaking. At last, he approached the gamester, and took his hand.

“What is your debt?” he asked gently.

“What matters it?—More than I can pay.”

“If life is a trust, so is wealth; *you* have the first in charge for others—*I* may have the last. What is the debt?”

Legard started—it was a strong struggle between shame and hope. “If I could borrow it, I could repay it hereafter—I know I could—I would not think of it otherwise.”

“Very well, so be it—I will lend you the money, on one condition.—Solemnly promise me, on your faith as a soldier and a gentleman, that you will not, for ten years to come—even if

you grow rich, and can ruin others—touch card or dice-box. Promise me, that you will shun all gaming for gain, under whatever disguise—whatever appellation. I will take your word as my bond.”

Legard, overjoyed, and scarcely trusting his senses, gave the promise.

“ Sleep, then, to-night, in hope and assurance of the morrow,” said the Englishman—“ let this event be an omen to you, that while there is a future there is no despair. One word more—I do not want your thanks—it is easy to be generous at the expense of justice. Perhaps I have been so now. This sum, which is to save your life—which you so little value—might have blessed fifty human beings better men than either the giver or the donor. What is given to error, may perhaps be a wrong to virtue. When you would ask others to support a career of blind and selfish extravagance, pause and think over the breadless lips this wasted gold would have filled!—the

joyless hearts it would have comforted ! You talk of repaying me—if the occasion offer, do so—if not, if we never meet again, and you have it in your power, pay it for me to the Poor ! And now, farewell.”

“ Stay—give me the name of my preserver ! mine is ”——

“ Hush ! what matter names ? This is a sacrifice we have both made to honour. You will sooner recover your self-esteem (and without self-esteem there is neither faith nor honour), when you think that your family, your connexions, are spared all association with your own error ; that I may hear them spoken of—that I may mix with them, without fancying that they owe me gratitude.”

“ Your own name then ? ” said Legard, deeply penetrated with the delicate generosity of his benefactor.

“ Tush ! ” muttered the stranger impatiently, as he closed the door.

The next morning, when he woke, Legard

saw upon the table a small packet—it contained a sum that exceeded the debt named. On the envelope was written—“ Remember the bond.”

The stranger had already quitted Venice. He had not travelled through the Italian cities under his own name, for he had just returned from the solitudes of the East, and not yet hardened to the publicity of the gossip that in towns haunted by his countrymen attended a well-known name: that given to Legard by the inn-keeper, mutilated by Italian pronunciation, the young man had never heard before, and soon forgot. He paid his debts, and he scrupulously kept his word. The adventure of that night went far, indeed, to reform and ennoble the mind and habits of George Legard. Time passed, and he never met his benefactor, till in the halls of Burleigh he recognised the stranger in Maltravers.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Why value, then, that strength of mind they boast,
As often varying, and as often lost ?”

HAWKINS BROWNE (*translated by* SOAME JENYNS).

MALTRAVERS was lying at length, with his dogs around him, under a beach-tree that threw its arms over one of the calm still pieces of water that relieved the groves of Burleigh, when Colonel Legard spied him from the bridle-road, which led through the park to the house. The Colonel dismounted, threw the rein over his arm; and, at the sound of the hoofs, Maltravers turned, saw the visiter, and rose; he held out his hand to Legard, and

immediately began talking of indifferent matters.

Legard was embarrassed, but his nature was not one to profit by the silence of a benefactor. — “Mr. Maltravers,” said he, with graceful emotion, “though you have not yet allowed me an opportunity to allude to it, do not think I am ungrateful for the service you rendered me?—I know how much I am in your debt.”

Maltravers looked grave, but made no reply. Legard resumed, with a heightened colour.

“I cannot say how I regret that it is not yet in my power to discharge my debt—but—”

“When it is, you will do so. Pray think no more of it. Are you going to the Rectory?”

“No, not this morning; in fact, I leave B——shire to-morrow.—Pleasant family, the Mertons.”

“ And Miss Cameron ?—”

“ Is certainly beautiful — and very rich. How could she ever think of marrying Lord Vargrave—so much older—she who could have so many admirers ?”

“ Not surely while betrothed to another.”

This was a refinement which Legard, though an honourable man as men go, did not quite understand. “ Oh,” said he, “ that was by some eccentric old relation—her father-in-law, I think.—Do you think she is bound by such an engagement ?”

Maltravers made no reply, but amused himself by throwing a stick into the water, and sending one of his dogs after it.

Legard looked on, and his affectionate disposition yearned to make advances which something distant in the manner of Maltravers chilled and repelled.

When Legard was gone, Maltravers followed him with his eyes. “ And this is the man whom Cleveland thinks Evelyn could

love. I could forgive her marrying Vargrave. Independently of the conscientious feeling that may belong to the engagement, Vargrave has wit, talent, intellect—and this man has nothing but the skin of the panther. Was I wrong to save him? No. Every human life, I suppose, has its uses. But Evelyn—I could despise her, if her heart was the fool of the eye!”

These comments were most unjust to Legard; but they were just of that kind of injustice which the man of talent often commits against the man of external advantages, and which the latter still more often retaliates on the man of talent. As Maltravers thus soliloquized, he was accosted by Mr. Cleveland.

“Come, Ernest, you must not cut these unfortunate Mertons any longer. If you continue to do so, do you know what Mrs. Hare and the world will say?”

“No.—What?”

“That you have been refused by Miss Merton.”

“That *would* be a calumny!” said Ernest, smiling.

“Or that you are hopelessly in love with Miss Cameron.”

Maltravers started—his proud heart swelled—he pulled his hat over his brows, and said, after a short pause—

“Well, Mrs. Hare and the world must not have it all their own way—and so, whenever you go to the Rectory, take me with you.”

CHAPTER VIII.

———— The more he strove
T' advance his suit, the farther from her love.
Theodore and Honoria.—DRYDEN.

THE line of conduct which Vargrave now adopted with regard to Evelyn, was craftily conceived and carefully pursued. He did not hazard a single syllable which might draw on him a rejection of his claims; but, at the same time, no lover could be more constant, more devoted, in attentions. In the presence of others, there was an air of familiar intimacy, that seemed to arrogate a right,

which to her he scrupulously shunned to assert. Nothing could be more respectful, nay, more timid, than his language—or more calmly confident than his manner. Not having much vanity, nor any very acute self-conceit, he did not delude himself into the idea of winning Evelyn's affections; he rather sought to entangle her judgment—to weave around her web upon web—not the less dangerous for being invisible. He took the compact as a matter of course—as something not to be broken by any possible chance; her hand was to be his as a right: it was her heart that he so anxiously sought to gain! But this distinction was so delicately drawn, and insisted upon so little in any tangible form, that, whatever Evelyn's wishes for an understanding, a much more experienced woman would have been at a loss to ripen one.

Evelyn longed to confide in Caroline—to consult her. But Caroline, though still kind, had grown distant.

"I wish," said Evelyn, one night as she sate in Caroline's dressing-room—"I wish that I knew what tone to take with Lord Vargrave. I feel more and more convinced that an union between us is impossible; and yet, precisely because he does not press it, am I unable to tell him so. I wish you could undertake that task; you seem such friends with him."

"I!" said Caroline, changing countenance.

"Yes, you! Nay, do not blush, or I shall think you envy me. Could you not save us both from the pain that otherwise must come, sooner or later?"

"Lord Vargrave would not thank me for such an act of friendship. Besides, Evelyn, consider—it is scarcely possible to break off this engagement *now*."

Now! and why now?" said Evelyn, astonished.

"The world believes it so implicitly—observe whoever sits next you rises if Lord Var-

grave approaches : the neighbourhood talk of nothing else but your marriage ; and your fate, Evelyn, is not pitied."

" I will leave this place—I will go back to the Cottage—I cannot bear this !" said Evelyn, passionately wringing her hands.

" You do not love another, I am sure ; not young Mr. Hare, with his green coat and straw-coloured whiskers ; nor Sir Henry Foxglove, with a how-d'-ye-do like a view-halloo ; perhaps, indeed, Colonel Legard—he is handsome. What ! do you blush at his name ? No ; you say not Legard : who else is there ?

" You are cruel—you trifle with me !" said Evelyn, in tearful reproach ; and she rose to go to her own room.

" My dear girl !" said Caroline, touched by her evident pain ; " learn from me—if I may say so—that marriages are *not* made in heaven : yours will be as fortunate as earth can bestow. A love-match is usually the least happy of all. Our foolish sex demand so

much in love ; and love, after all, is but one blessing among many. Wealth and rank remain when love is but a heap of ashes. For my part, I have chosen my destiny and my husband."

" Your husband ! "

" Yes ! you see him in Lord Doltimore. I dare say we shall be as happy as any amorous Corydon and Phillis." But there was irony in Caroline's voice as she spoke ; and she sighed heavily. Evelyn did not believe her serious : and the friends parted for the night.

" Mine is a strange fate ! " said Caroline to herself ; " I am asked by the man whom I love, and who professes to love me, to bestow myself on another, and to plead for him to a younger and fairer bride. Well, I will obey him in the first ; the last is a bitterer task, and I cannot perform it earnestly. Yet Vargrave has a strange power over me : and when I look round the world, I see that he is right.

In these most common-place artifices, there is yet a wild majesty that charms and fascinates me. It is something to rule the world : and his and mine are natures formed to do so."

CHAPTER IX.

“——A smoke raised with the fume of sighs.”

Romeo and Juliet.

It is certain that Evelyn experienced for Maltravers sentiments that, if not love, might easily be mistaken for it. But whether it were that master-passion, or merely its fanciful resemblance,—love, in early youth and innocent natures, if of sudden growth, is long before it makes itself apparent. Evelyn had been prepared to feel an interest in her solitary neighbour. His mind, as developed in his works,

had half formed her own. Her childish adventure with the stranger had never been forgotten. Her present knowledge of Maltravers was an union of dangerous and often opposite associations—the Ideal and the Real.

Love, in its first dim and imperfect shape, is but imagination concentrated on one object. It is a genius of the heart, resembling that of the intellect; it appeals to, it stirs up, it evokes the sentiments and sympathies that lie most latent in our nature. Its sigh is the spirit that moves over the ocean, and rouses the Anadyomene into life. Therefore is it, that MIND produces affections deeper than those of external form; therefore it is, that women are worshippers of glory, which is the palpable and visible representative of a genius whose operations they cannot always comprehend. Genius has so much in common with love—the imagination that animates one is so much the property of the other—that there is not a surer sign of the existence of genius than the love

that it creates and bequeaths. It penetrates deeper than the reason—it binds a nobler captive than the fancy. As the sun upon the dial, it gives to the human heart both its shadow and its light. Nations are its worshippers and wooers; and Posterity learns from its oracles to dream—to aspire—to adore!

Had Maltravers declared the passion that consumed him, it is probable that it would soon have kindled a return. But his frequent absence, his sustained distance of manner, had served to repress the feelings that in a young and virgin heart rarely flow with much force, until they are invited and aroused. *Le besoin d'aimer* in girls, is, perhaps, in itself powerful; but it is fed by another want, *le besoin d'être aimée*! If, therefore, Evelyn, at present, felt love for Maltravers, the love had certainly not passed into the core of life: the tree had not so far struck its roots but what it might have borne transplanting. There was in her enough of the pride of sex, to have

recoiled from the thought of giving love to one who had not asked the treasure. Capable of attachment, more trustful—and, therefore, if less vehement—more beautiful and durable than that which had animated the brief tragedy of Florence Lascelles,—she could not have been the unknown correspondent, or revealed the soul, because the features wore a mask.

It must also be allowed that, in some respects, Evelyn was too young and inexperienced thoroughly to appreciate all that was most truly loveable and attractive in Maltravers. At four-and-twenty she would, perhaps, have felt no fear mingled with her respect for him; but seventeen and six-and-thirty—it is a wide interval! She never felt that there was that difference in years until she had met Legard—and then at once she comprehended it. With Legard she moved on equal terms; he was not too wise—too high for her everyday thoughts. He less excited her imagina-

tion—less attracted her reverence. But, somehow or other, that voice which proclaimed her power, those eyes which never turned from hers, went nearer to her heart. As Evelyn had once said to Caroline, “It was a great enigma!”—her own feelings were a mystery to her; and she reclined by the “Golden Waterfalls” without tracing her likeness in the glass of the pool below.

Maltravers appeared again at the Rectory. He joined their parties by day, and his evenings were spent with them as of old. In this I know not precisely what were his motives—perhaps he did not know them himself. It might be that his pride was roused;—it might be that he could not endure the notion that Lord Vargrave should guess his secret, by an absence almost otherwise unaccountable;—he could not patiently bear to give Vargrave that triumph;—it might be, that in the sternness of his self-esteem, he imagined he had already

conquered all save affectionate interest in Evelyn's fate, and trusted too vainly to his own strength;—and it might be, also, that he could not resist the temptation of seeing whether Evelyn were contented with her lot, and whether Vargrave were worthy of the blessing that awaited him. Whether one of these, or all united, made him resolve to brave his danger—or whether, after all, he yielded to a weakness, or consented to what—invited by Evelyn herself—was almost a social necessity, the reader, and not the narrator, shall decide.

Legard was gone; but Doltimore remained in the neighbourhood, having hired a hunting-box not far from Sir John Merton's manors, over which he easily obtained permission to sport. When he did not dine elsewhere, there was always a place for him at the Parson's hospitable table—and that place was generally next to Caroline. Mr. and Mrs. Merton had given up all hope of Mr. Maltravers for their

eldest daughter ; and, very strangely, this conviction came upon their minds on the first day they made the acquaintance of the young Lord.

“ My dear,” said the Rector, as he was winding up his watch, preparatory to entering the connubial couch—“ my dear, I do not think Mr. Maltravers is a marrying man.”

“ I was just going to make the same remark,” said Mrs. Merton, drawing the clothes over her. “ Lord Doltimore is a very fine young man—his estates unencumbered. I like him vastly, my love. He is evidently smitten with Caroline ; so Lord Vargrave and Mrs. Hare said.”

“ Sensible, shrewd woman, Mrs. Hare. By-the-bye, we’ll send her a pine-apple. Caroline was made to be a woman of rank ! ”.

“ Quite ; so much self-possession.”

“ And if Mr. Maltravers would sell or let Burleigh ! ”—

“ It would be so pleasant ! ”

“ Had you not better give Caroline a hint ? ”

“ My love, she is so sensible, let her go her own way.”

“ You are right, my dear Betsy ; I shall always say that no one has more common-sense than you ; you have brought up your children admirably ! ”

“ Dear Charles ! ”

“ It is coldish to night, love,” said the Rector ; and he put out the candle.

From that time, it was not the fault of Mr. and Mrs. Merton if Lord Doltimore did not find their house the pleasantest in the county.

One evening the Rectory party were assembled together in the cheerful drawing-room. Cleveland, Mr. Merton, Sir John—and Lord Vargrave reluctantly compelled to make up the fourth—were at the whist-table ; Evelyn, Caroline, and Lord Doltimore, were seated round the fire, and Mrs. Merton was working a footstool. The fire burned clear—the curtains were down—the

children in bed : it was a family picture of elegant comfort.

Mr. Maltravers was announced.

“ I am glad you are come at last,” said Caroline, holding out her fair hand. “ Mr. Cleveland could not answer for you. We are all disputing as to which mode of life is the happiest.”

“ And your opinion?” asked Maltravers seating himself in the vacant chair—it chanced to be next to Evelyn’s.

“ My opinion is decidedly in favour of London. A metropolitan life with its perpetual and graceful excitements;—the best music—the best companions—the best things, in short. Provincial life is so dull, its pleasures so tiresome; to talk over the last year’s news, and wear out one’s last year’s dresses; cultivate a conservatory, and play Pope Joan with a young party. Dreadful!”

“ I agree with Miss Merton,” said Lord Doltimore solemnly; “ not but what I like

the country for three or four months in the year, with good shooting and hunting, and a large house properly filled—independent of one's own neighbourhood: but if I am condemned to choose one place to live in, give me Paris."

"Ah! Paris: I never was in Paris. I should so like to travel!" said Caroline.

"But the inns abroad are so very bad," said Lord Doltimore; "how people can rave about Italy, I can't think. I never suffered so much in my life as I did in Calabria; and at Venice I was bit to death by musquitos. Nothing like Paris, I assure you: don't you think so, Mr. Maltravers?"

"Perhaps I shall be able to answer you better in a short time. I think of accompanying Mr. Cleveland to Paris."

"Indeed!" said Caroline. "Well, I envy you; but it is a sudden resolution?"

"Not very."

"Do you stay long?" asked Lord Doltimore.

“ My stay is uncertain.”

“ And you won’t let Burleigh in the mean while?”

“ *Let* Burleigh? No; if it once pass from my hands it will be for ever!”

Maltravers spoke gravely, and the subject was changed. Lord Doltimore challenged Caroline to chess.

They sat down, and Lord Doltimore arranged the pieces.

“ Sensible man, Mr. Maltravers,” said the young lord; “but I don’t hit it off with him: Vargrave is more agreeable. Don’t you think so?”

“ Y—e—s.”

“ Lord Vargrave is very kind to me; I never remember any one being more so;—got Legard that appointment solely because it would please *me*—very friendly fellow! I mean to put myself under his wing next Session!”

“ You could not do better, I’m sure,” said

Caroline ; “ he is so much looked up to—I dare say he will be Prime Minister one of these days.”

“ I take the bishop: — do you think so really?—you are rather a politician?”

“ Oh no; not much of that. But my father and my uncle are staunch politicians; gentlemen know so much more than ladies. We should always go by their opinions—I think I will take the queen’s pawn—your politics are the same as Lord Vargrave’s?”

“ Yes, I fancy so—at least I shall leave my proxy with him—glad you don’t like politics—great bore.”

“ Why, so young, so connected as you are” — Caroline stopped short and made a wrong move.

“ I wish we were going to Paris together, *we* should enjoy it so;”—and Lord Doltimore’s knight checked the tower and queen.

Caroline coughed, and stretched her hand quickly to move.

“ Pardon me, you will lose the game if you do so ! ” and Doltimore placed his hand on hers—their eyes met—Caroline turned away, and Lord Doltimore settled his right collar.

“ And is it true ? are you really going to leave us ? ” said Evelyn ;—and she felt very sad. But still the sadness might not be that of love ;—she had felt sad after Legard had gone.

“ I do not think I shall stay long away,” said Maltravers, trying to speak indifferently. “ Burleigh has become more dear to me than it was in earlier youth ; perhaps, because I have made myself duties there : and in other places, I am but an isolated and useless unit in the great mass.”

“ You !—everywhere, you must have occupations and resources—everywhere, you must find yourself not alone. But you will not go yet ? ”

“ Not yet : no. (Evelyn’s spirits rose.) Have you read the book I sent you ? ” (it was one of De Staël’s.)

“ Yes ; but it disappoints me.”

“ And why ? it is eloquent ? ”

“ But is it true ? is there so much melancholy in life ? are the affections so full of bitterness ? For me, I am so happy when with those I love ! When I am with my mother, the air seems more fragrant—the skies more blue—it is surely not affection, but the absence of it that makes us melancholy ? ”

“ Perhaps so ; but if we had never known affection, we might not miss it : and the brilliant Frenchwoman speaks from memory ; while you speak from Hope—Memory, which is the ghost of joy—yet surely, even in the indulgence of affection, there is at times a certain melancholy—a certain fear. Have you never felt it, even with—with your mother ? ”

“ Ah, yes ! when she suffered, or when I have thought she loved me less than I desired.”

“ That must have been an idle and vain thought. Your mother ! does she resemble you ? ”

“ I wish I could think so. Oh, if you knew her ! I have longed so often that you were acquainted with each other ! It was she who taught me to sing your songs.”

“ My dear Mrs. Hare, we may as well throw up our cards,” said the keen clear voice of Lord Vargrave—“ you have played most admirably, and I know that your last card will be the ace of trumps ; still the luck is against us.”

“ No, no, pray play it out, my Lord.”

“ Quite useless, Ma'am,” said Sir John, showing two honours. “ We have only the trick to make.”

“ Quite useless,” echoed Lumley, tossing down his sovereigns, and rising with a careless yawn.

“ How d’ye do, Maltravers ?”

Maltravers rose ; and Vargrave turned to Evelyn, and addressed her in a whisper. The proud Maltravers walked away, and suppressed a sigh ; a moment more, and he saw

Lord Vargrave occupying the chair he had left vacant. He laid his hand on Cleveland's shoulder.

“ The carriage is waiting—are you ready ? ”

CHAPTER X.

“Obscuris vera involvens.”

VIRGIL.

A DAY or two after the date of the last Chapter, Evelyn and Caroline were riding out with Lord Vargrave and Mr. Merton, and on returning home they passed through the village of Burleigh.

“Maltravers, I suppose, has an eye to the county, one of these days,” said Lord Vargrave, who honestly fancied that a man’s eyes were always directed towards something for his own interest or advancement, “otherwise

he could not surely take all this trouble about workhouses and paupers. Who could ever have imagined my romantic friend would sink into a country squire?"

"It is astonishing what talent and energy he throws into everything he attempts," said the Parson. "One could not, indeed, have supposed that a man of genius could make a man of business."

"Flattering to your humble servant—whom all the world allow to be the last, and deny to be the first. But your remark shows what a sad possession genius is—like the rest of the world, you fancy immediately that it cannot be of the least possible use. If a man is called a genius, it means that he is to be thrust out of all the good things in this life. He is not fit for anything but a garret! Put a *genius* into office!—make a *genius* a bishop! or a lord chancellor!—the world would be turned topsyturvy! You see that you are quite astonished, that a genius can be even

a county magistrate, and know the difference between a spade and a poker! In fact, a genius is supposed to be the most ignorant, impracticable, good-for-nothing, do-nothing, sort of thing that ever walked upon two legs. Well, when I began life, I took excellent care that nobody should take *me* for a genius—and it is only within the last year or two that I have ventured to emerge a little out of my shell. I have not been the better for it; I was getting on faster while I was merely a plodder. The world is so fond of that droll fable, the hare and the tortoise—it really believes, that because (I suppose the fable to be true) a tortoise *once* beat a hare, that all tortoises are much better runners than hares possibly can be. Mediocre men have the monopoly of the loaves and fishes; and even when talent does rise in life, it is a talent that only differs from mediocrity by being more energetic and bustling.”

“ You are bitter, Lord Vargrave,” said

Caroline, laughing, "yet surely you have had no reason to complain of the non-appreciation of talent."

"Humph! if I had had a grain more talent I should have been crushed by it. There is a subtle allegory in the story of the lean poet, who put *lead* in his pockets to prevent being blown away!—*Mais à nos moutons*, to return to Maltravers—let us suppose that he was merely clever—had not had a particle of what is called genius—been merely a hard-working able gentleman, of good character and fortune—he might be half way up the hill by this time;—whereas now, what is he? Less before the public than he was at twenty-eight—a discontented anchorite, a meditative idler."

"No, not that," said Evelyn, warmly, and then checked herself.

Lord Vargrave looked at her sharply; but his knowledge of life told him that Legard was a much more dangerous rival than

Maltravers. Now and then, it is true, a suspicion to the contrary crossed him ; but it did not take root and become a serious apprehension. Still he did not quite like the tone of voice in which Evelyn had put in her abrupt negative, and said, with a slight sneer,

“ If not that, what is he ? ”

“ One who purchased, by the noblest exertions, the right to be idle,” said Evelyn, with spirit, “ and whom genius itself will not suffer to be idle long.”

“ Besides,” said Mr. Merton, “ he has won a high reputation, which he cannot lose merely by not seeking to increase it.”

“ Reputation !—Oh yes—we give men like that—men of genius—a large property in the clouds, in order to justify ourselves in pushing them out of our way below. But if they are contented with fame, why they deserve their fate. Hang fame—give me power.”

“ And is there no power in genius ? ” said Evelyn, with deepening fervour—“ no power

over the mind, and the heart, and the thought;—no power over its own time;—over posterity;—over nations yet uncivilized—races yet unborn?”

This burst from one so simple and young as Evelyn, seemed to Vargrave so surprising, that he stared on her without saying a word.

“You will laugh at my championship,” she added, with a blush and a smile; “but you provoked the encounter.”

“And you have won the battle,” said Vargrave, with prompt gallantry. “My charming ward, every day developes in you some new gift of nature!”

Caroline, with a movement of impatience, put her horse into a canter.

Just at this time, from a cross-road, emerged a horseman—it was Maltravers. The party halted; salutations were exchanged.

“I suppose you have been enjoying the sweet business of squiredom,” said Vargrave gaily—“Atticus and his farm—classical asso-

ciations! Charming weather for the agriculturist, eh! what news about corn and barley? I suppose our English habit of talking on the weather arose when we were all a squirarchal, farming, George-the-Third kind of people! Weather is really a serious matter to gentlemen who are interested in beans and vetches—wheat and hay. You hang your happiness upon the changes of the moon!”

“As you upon the smiles of a minister.—The weather of a court is more capricious than that of the skies; at least we are better husbandmen than you, who sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.”

“Well retorted: and really, when I look round, I am half inclined to envy you—were I not Vargrave, I would be Maltravers.”

It was indeed a scene that seemed quiet and serene with the English union of the Feudal and the Pastoral life; the village-green, with its trim scattered cottages—the fields and pastures that spread beyond—the

turf of the park behind, broken by the shadows of the unequal grounds, with its mounds, and hollows, and venerable groves—from which rose the turrets of the old hall, its mullion windows gleaming in the western sun;—a scene that preached tranquillity and content, and might have been equally grateful to humble philosophy and hereditary pride.

“I never saw any place so peculiar in its character as Burleigh,” said the Rector; “the old seats left to us in England are chiefly those of our great nobles. It is so rare to see one, that does not aspire beyond the residence of a private gentleman, preserve all the relics of the Tudor age.”

“I think,” said Vargrave, turning to Evelyn, “that as, by my uncle’s will, your fortune is to be laid out in the purchase of land, we could not find a better investment than Burleigh. So, whenever you are inclined to sell, Maltravers, I think we must outbid Doltimore. What say you, my fair ward?”

“ Leave Burleigh in peace, I beseech you ! ”
said Maltravers angrily.

“ That is said like a Digby,” returned Vargrave. “ *Allons !*—will you not come home with us ? ”

“ I thank you—not to-day.”

“ We meet at Lord Raby’s next Thursday. It is a ball given almost wholly in honour of your return to Burleigh ; we are all going—it is my young cousin’s *début* at Knaresdean. We have all an interest in her conquests.”

Now as Maltravers looked up to answer, he caught Evelyn’s glance, and his voice faltered.

“ Yes,” he said, “ we shall meet—once again—Adieu ! ”—he wheeled round his horse—and they separated.

“ I can bear this no more,” said Maltravers to himself ; “ I overrated my strength. To see her thus day after day, and to know her

another's—to writhe beneath his calm, unconscious assertion of his rights. Happy Vargrave!—and yet, ah! will *she* be happy?—Oh! could I think so!”

Thus soliloquizing, he suffered the rein to fall on the neck of his horse, which paced slowly home through the village, till it stopped—as if in the mechanism of custom—at the door of a cottage, a stone's-throw from the lodge. At this door, indeed, for several successive days had Maltravers stopped regularly; it was now tenanted by the poor woman, his introduction to whom has been before narrated. She had recovered from the immediate effects of the injury she had sustained; but her constitution, greatly broken by previous suffering and exhaustion, had received a mortal shock. She was hurt inwardly; and the surgeon informed Maltravers that she had not many months to live. He had placed her under the roof of one of his favourite cot-

tagers, where she received all the assistance and alleviation that careful nursing and medical advice could give her.

This poor woman, whose name was Sarah Elton, interested Maltravers much; she had known better days:—there was a certain propriety in her expressions which denoted an education superior to her circumstances—and, what touched Maltravers most, she seemed far more to feel her husband's death than her own sufferings; which, somehow or other, is not common with widows the other side of forty! We say that youth easily consoles itself for the robberies of the grave—middle age is a still better self-comforter. When Mrs. Elton found herself installed in the cottage, she looked round and burst into tears.

“And William is not here!” she said. “Friends—friends! if we had had but one such friend before he died!”

Maltravers was pleased that her first thought was rather that of sorrow for the dead,

than of gratitude for the living. Yet Mrs. Elton was grateful—simply, honestly, deeply grateful; her manner—her voice betokened it. And she seemed so glad when her benefactor called to speak kindly, and inquire cordially, that Maltravers did so constantly; at first, from a compassionate, and at last, from a selfish motive—for who is not pleased to give pleasure? And Maltravers had so few things in the world to care for him, that perhaps he was flattered by the grateful respect of this humble stranger.

When his horse stopped, the cottager's daughter opened the door and curtsied—it was an invitation to enter; and he threw his rein over the paling and walked into the cottage.

Mrs. Elton, who had been seated by the open casement, rose to receive him. But Maltravers made her sit down, and soon put her at her ease. The woman and her daughter who occupied the cottage retired into the

garden ; and Mrs. Elton, watching them withdraw, then exclaimed, abruptly—

“ Oh, Sir ! I have so longed to see you this morning. I so long to make bold to ask you whether, indeed, I dreamed it—or did I, when you first took me to your house—did I see —” She stopped abruptly ; and, though she strove to suppress her emotion, it was too strong for her efforts—she sunk back on her chair, pale as death, and almost gasped for breath.

Maltravers waited in surprise for her recovery.

“ I beg pardon, Sir—I was thinking of days long past ; and—but I wished to ask whether, when I lay in your hall, almost insensible, any one besides yourself and your servants were present?—or was it”—added the woman with a shudder—“ was it the dead ? ”

“ I remember,” said Maltravers, much struck and interested in her question and manner, “ that a lady was present.”

“ It is so—it is so ! ” cried the woman, half rising and clasping her hands. “ And she passed by this cottage a little time ago ;—her veil was thrown aside as she turned that fair young face towards the cottage. Her name, Sir—oh ! what is her name ? It was the same—the same face that shone across me in that hour of pain ! I did not dream !—I was not mad ! ”

“ Compose yourself ; you could never, I think, have seen that lady before : her name is Cameron.”

“ Cameron—Cameron ! ”—the woman shook her head mournfully—“ No ; that name is strange to me : and her mother, Sir—she is dead ? ”

“ No ; her mother lives.”

A shade came over the face of the sufferer ; and she said, after a pause—

“ My eyes deceived me then, Sir ; and indeed, I feel that my head is touched, and I

wander sometimes. But the likeness was so great ; yet that young lady is even lovelier ! ”

“ Likenesses are very deceitful, and very capricious ; and depend more on fancy than reality. One person discovers a likeness between faces most dissimilar, a likeness invisible to others. But who does Miss Cameron resemble ? ”

“ One now dead, Sir ; dead many years ago. But it is a long story, and one that lies heavy on my conscience. Some day or other, if you will give me leave, Sir, I will unburthen myself to you.”

“ If I can assist you in any way, command me. Meanwhile, have you no friends, no relations, no children, whom you would wish to see ? ”

“ Children !—no, Sir ; I never had but one child, of *my own*” (she laid an emphasis on the last words), “ and that died in a foreign land ! ”

“ And no other relatives ? ”

“None, Sir. My history is very short and simple. I was well brought up—an only child. My father was a small farmer ; he died when I was sixteen, and I went into service with a kind old lady and her daughter, who treated me more as a companion than a servant. I was a vain, giddy girl then, Sir. A young man, the son of a neighbouring farmer, courted me, and I was much attached to him ; but neither of us had money, and his parents would not give their consent to our marrying. I was silly enough to think that, if William loved me, he should have braved all ; and his prudence mortified me ; so I married another whom I did not love. I was rightly punished, for he ill-used me, and took to drinking ; I returned to my old service to escape from him—for I was with child, and my life was in danger from his violence. He died suddenly, and in debt. And then, afterwards, a gentleman—a rich gentleman—to whom I rendered a service—(do not misunderstand me, Sir if I

say, the service was one of which I repent)—gave me money, and made me rich enough to marry my first lover ; and William and I went to America. We lived many years in New York upon our little fortune comfortably ; and I was a long while happy, for I had always loved William dearly. My first affliction was the death of my child by my first husband ; but I was soon roused from my grief. William schemed and speculated, as every body else does in America, and so we lost all ; and William was weakly, and could not work. At length he got the place of steward on board a vessel from New York to Liverpool, and I was taken to assist in the cabin. We wanted to come to London : I thought my old benefactor might do something for us, though he had never answered the letters I sent him. But poor William fell ill on board, and died in sight of land.”

Mrs. Elton wept bitterly, but with the sub-

duced grief of one to whom tears have been familiar; and when she recovered, she soon brought her humble tale to an end. She herself, incapacitated from all work by sorrow and a breaking constitution, was left in the streets of Liverpool without other means of subsistence than the charitable contributions of the passengers and sailors on board the vessel. With this sum she had gone to London, where she found her old patron had been long since dead, and she had no claims on his family. She had, on quitting England, left one relation settled in a town in the north; thither she now repaired, to find her last hope wrecked; the relation also was dead and gone. Her money was now spent, and she had begged her way along the road, or through the lanes, she scarce knew whither, till the accident, which, in shortening her life, had raised up a friend for its close.

“And such, Sir,” said she in conclusion,

“such has been the story of my life, except one part of it, which, if I get stronger, I can tell better ; but you will excuse that now.”

“And you are comfortable and contented, my poor friend? These people are kind to you?”

“Oh, so kind !—and every night we all pray for you, Sir ; you ought to be happy, if the blessings of the poor can avail the rich.”

Maltravers remounted his horse and sought his home ; and his heart was lighter than before he entered that cottage. But at evening Cleveland talked of Vargrave and Evelyn ; and the good fortune of one, and the charms of the other ; and the wound, so well concealed, bled afresh.

“I heard from De Montaigne the other day,” said Ernest, just as they were retiring for the night, “and his letter decides my movements. If you will accept me, then, as a travelling companion, I will go with you to

Paris. Have you made up your mind to leave Burleigh on Saturday?"

"Yes; that gives us a day to recover from Lord Raby's ball. I am so delighted at your offer!—we need only stay a day or so in town. The excursion will do you good—your spirits, my dear Ernest, seem more dejected than when you first returned to England: you live too much alone here; you will enjoy Burleigh more on your return. And perhaps then you will open the old house a little more to the neighbourhood, and to your friends. They expect it; you are looked to for the county."

"I have done with politics, and sicken but for peace."

"Pick up a wife in Paris, and you will then know that peace is an impossible possession," said the old bachelor, laughing.

THE END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

Νήπιοι· οὐδ' ἴσασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἡμίσει παντὸς.

HES. Op. et Dies, 40.

Fools blind to truth, nor know their erring soul
How much the half is better than the whole.

CHAPTER I.

“Do, as the Heavens have done; forget your evil;
With them, forgive yourself.”

The Winter's Tale.

“——the sweet'st companion, that e'er man
Bred his hopes out of.”

Ibid.

THE curate of Brook Green was sitting outside his door. The vicarage which he inhabited was a straggling, irregular, but picturesque building; humble enough to suit the means of the curate, yet large enough to accommodate the vicar. It had been built in an age when the *indigentes et pauperes*, for whom universities were founded, supplied, more than they do now, the fountains of the Christian ministry;—when pastor and flock were more on an equality.

From under a rude and arched porch, with an oaken settle on either side for the poor visitor, the door opened at once upon the old-fashioned parlour—a homely but pleasant room, with one wide but low cottage-casement, beneath which stood the dark shining table, that supported the large Bible in its green baize cover; the Concordance, and the last Sunday's sermon, in its ebon case. There by the fire-place stood the bachelor's round elbow-chair, with a needle-work cushion at the back: a walnut-tree bureau; another table or two; half a dozen plain chairs constituted the rest of the furniture, saving some two or three hundred volumes, ranged in neat shelves on the clean wainscoted walls. There was another room, to which you ascended by two steps, communicating with this parlour, smaller, but finer, and inhabited only on festive days, when Lady Vargrave, or some other quiet neighbour, came to drink tea with the good curate.

An old housekeeper and her grandson—a young fellow of about two-and-twenty, who tended the garden, milked the cow, and did in fact what he was wanted to do—composed the establishment of the humble minister.

We have digressed from Mr. Aubrey himself.

The curate was seated then, one fine summer morning, on a bench at the left of his porch, screened from the sun by the cool boughs of a chesnut-tree, the shadow of which half covered the little lawn that separated the precincts of the house from those of silent Death and everlasting Hope ; above the irregular and moss-grown paling rose the village church ; and, through openings in the trees, beyond the burial-ground, partially gleamed the white walls of Lady Vargrave's cottage, and were seen at a distance, the sails on the

“ Mighty waters rolling evermore.”

The old man was calmly enjoying the beauty

of the morning, the freshness of the air, the warmth of the dancing beam, and not least, perhaps, his own peaceful thoughts; the spontaneous children of a contemplative spirit, and a quiet conscience. His was the age when we most sensitively enjoy the mere sense of existence; when the face of Nature, and a passive conviction of the benevolence of our Great Father, suffice to create a serene and ineffable happiness, which rarely visits us till we have done with the passions;—till memories, if more alive than heretofore, are yet mellowed in the hues of time, and Faith softens into harmony all their asperities and harshness;—till nothing within us remains to cast a shadow over the things without;—and on the verge of life, the Angels are nearer to us than of yore. There is an old age which has more youth of heart than youth itself!

As the old man thus sate, the little gate through which, on Sabbath days, he was wont to pass from the humble mansion to the house

of God, noiselessly opened, and Lady Vargrave appeared.

The curate rose when he perceived her; and the lady's fair features were lighted up with a gentle pleasure, as she pressed his hand and returned his salutation.

There was a peculiarity in Lady Vargrave's countenance which I have rarely seen in others. Her smile, which was singularly expressive, came less from the lip than from the eyes; it was almost as if the brow smiled—it was as the sudden and momentary vanishing of a light but melancholy cloud that usually rested upon the features, placid as they were.

They sate down on the rustic bench, and the sea-breeze wantoned amongst the quivering leaves of the chesnut-tree that overhung their seat.

“ I have come, as usual, to consult my kind friend,” said Lady Vargrave; “ and, as usual also, it is about our absent Evelyn.”

“ Have you heard again from her, this morning ? ”

“ Yes ; and her letter increases the anxiety which your observation, so much deeper than mine, first awakened.”

“ Does she then write much of Lord Vargrave ? ”

“ Not a great deal ; but the little she does say, betrays how much she shrinks from the union my poor husband desired ; more, indeed, than ever ! But this is not all, nor the worst : for you know, that the late Lord had provided against that probability—(he loved her so tenderly, his ambition for her only came from his affection) ; — and the letter he left behind him pardons and releases her, if she revolts from the choice he himself preferred.”

“ Lord Vargrave is perhaps a generous, he certainly seems a candid, man, and he must be sensible that his uncle has already done all that justice required.”

“ I think so. But this, as I said, is not all ; I have brought the letter to show you. It seems to me as you apprehended. This Mr. Maltravers has wound himself about her thoughts more than she herself imagines ; you see how she dwells on all that concerns him, and how, after checking herself, she returns again and again to the same subject.”

The curate put on his spectacles, and took the letter. It was a strange thing—that old greyhaired minister, evincing such grave interest in the secrets of that young heart ! But they who would take charge of the soul, must never be too wise to regard the heart !

Lady Vargrave looked over his shoulder as he bent down to read, and at times placed her finger on such passages as she wished him to note. The old curate nodded as she did so ; but neither spoke till the letter was concluded.

The curate then folded up the epistle, took off his spectacles, hemmed, and looked grave.

“ Well,” said Lady Vargrave, anxiously, “ well?”

“ My dear friend, the letter requires consideration. In the first place, it is clear to me that, in spite of Lord Vargrave's presence at the Rectory, his Lordship so manages matters that the poor child is unable of herself to bring that matter to a conclusion. And, indeed, to a mind so sensitively delicate and honourable, it is no easy task.”

“ Shall I write to Lord Vargrave? ”

“ Let us think of it. In the meanwhile, this Mr. Maltravers—”

“ Ah, this Mr. Maltravers! ”

“ The child shows us more of her heart than she thinks of; and yet I myself am puzzled. If you observe, she has only once or twice spoken of the Colonel Legard, whom she has made acquaintance with; while she treats at length of Mr. Maltravers, and confesses the effect he has produced on her mind. Yet, do

you know, I more dread the caution respecting the first, than all the candour that betrays the influence of the last? There is a great difference between first fancy and first love."

"Is there?" said the lady, abstractedly.

"Again—neither of us is acquainted with this singular man—I mean Maltravers; his character, temper, and principles—of all of which Evelyn is too young, too guileless, to judge for herself. One thing, however, in her letter speaks in his favour."

"What is that?"

"He absents himself from her. This, if he has discovered her secret—or if he himself is sensible of too great a charm in her presence—would be the natural course that an honourable and a strong mind would pursue."

"What!—If he love her?"

"Yes—while he believes her hand is engaged to another."

"True! What shall be done—if Evelyn

should love, and love in vain? Ah, it is the misery of a whole existence !”

“ Perhaps she had better return to us,” said Mr. Aubrey; “ and yet, if already it be too late, and her affections are engaged—we should still remain in ignorance respecting the motives and mind of the object of her attachment. And he, too, might not know the true nature of the obstacle connected with Lord Vargrave’s claims.”

“ Shall I, then, go to her? You know how I shrink from strangers—how I fear curiosity, doubts, and questions—how—(and Lady Vargrave’s voice faltered)—how unfitted I am for—for—” she stopped short, and a faint blush overspread her cheeks.

The curate understood her, and was moved.

“ Dear friend,” said he, “ will you intrust this charge to myself? You know how Evelyn is endeared to me by certain recollections! Perhaps, better than you, I may be enabled

silently to examine if this man be worthy of her, and one who could secure her happiness ;—perhaps, better than you, I may ascertain the exact nature of her own feelings towards him ; —perhaps too, better than you, I may effect an understanding with Lord Vargrave.”

“ You are always my kindest friend,” said the Lady with emotion ; “ how much I already owe you !—what hopes beyond the grave ! —what—”

“ Hush ! ” interrupted the Curate gently ; “ your own good heart and pure intentions have worked out your own atonement—may I hope also your own content. Let us return to our Evelyn : poor child ! how unlike this despondent letter to her gay light spirits when with us ! We acted for the best ; yet, perhaps we did wrong to yield her up to strangers. And this Maltravers !—with her enthusiasm and quick susceptibilities to genius—she was half prepared to imagine him all she depicts him to be. He must have a spell in his works

that I have not discovered—for at times it seems to operate even on you.”

“Because,” said Lady Vargrave, “they remind me of *his* conversation—*his* habits of thought. If like *him* in other things, Evelyn may indeed be happy !”

“And if,” said the curate curiously—“if now that you are free, you were ever to meet with *him* again, and his memory had been as faithful as yours—and if he offered the sole atonement in his power, for all that his early error cost you—if such a chance should happen in the vicissitudes of life, you would——”

The curate stopped short ; for he was struck by the exceeding paleness of his friend’s cheek, and the tremor of her delicate frame.

“If that were to happen,” said she in a very low voice ; “if we were to meet again, and if he were—as you and Mrs. Leslie seem to think—poor and, like myself, humbly born—if my fortune could assist him—if my love could

still—changed, altered as I am——ah! do not talk of it—I cannot bear the thought of happiness! And yet, if before I die I *could* but see him again!” She clasped her hands fervently as she spoke, and the blush that overspread her face threw over it so much of bloom and freshness, that even Evelyn, at that moment, would scarcely have seemed more young. “Enough,” she added, after a little while, as the glow died away. “It is but a foolish hope; all earthly love is buried; and my heart is there!”—she pointed to the heavens, and both were silent.

CHAPTER II.

“ Quibus otio vel magnificè, vel molliter vivere copia erat, incerta pro certis malebant.”

SALLUST.

LORD RABY—one of the wealthiest and most splendid noblemen in England—was prouder, perhaps, of his provincial distinctions, than the eminence of his rank, or the fashion of his wife. The magnificent châteaux—the immense estates of our English peers—tend to preserve to us, in spite of the freedom, bustle, and commercial grandeur of our people, more of the Norman attributes of aristocracy than can be found in other countries. In his county,

the great noble is a petty prince—his house is a court—his possessions and munificence are a boast to every proprietor in his district. They are as fond of talking of *the* Earl's or *the* Duke's movements and entertainments, as Dangeau was of the gossip of the Tuileries and Versailles.

Lord Raby, while affecting, as lieutenant of the county, to make no political distinctions between squire and squire—hospitable and affable to all—still by that very absence of exclusiveness, gave a tone to the politics of the whole county; and converted many who had once thought differently on the respective virtues of Whigs and Tories. A great man never loses so much as when he exhibits intolerance, or parades the right of persecution.

“My tenants shall vote exactly as they please,” said Lord Raby; and he was never known to have a tenant vote against his wishes! Keeping a vigilant eye on all the interests, and conciliating all the proprietors

in the county, he not only never lost a friend, but he kept together a body of partizans, that constantly added to its numbers.

Sir John Merton's colleague, a young Lord Nelthorpe, who could not speak three sentences if you took away his hat ; and who, constant at Almacks, was not only inaudible, but invisible in Parliament, had no chance of being re-elected. Lord Nelthorpe's father, the Earl of Mainwaring, was a new peer ; and, next to Lord Raby, the richest nobleman in the county. Now though they were much of the same politics, Lord Raby hated Lord Mainwaring. They were too near each other—they clashed—they had the jealousy of rival princes !

Lord Raby was delighted at the notion of getting rid of Lord Nelthorpe—it would be so sensible a blow to the Mainwaring interest. The party had been looking out for a new candidate, and Maltravers had been much talked of. It is true that, when in Parliament some years before, the politics of Mal-

travers had differed from those of Lord Raby and his set. But Maltravers had of late taken no share in politics—had uttered no political opinions—was intimate with the electioneering Mertons—was supposed to be a discontented man—and politicians believe in no discontent that is not political. Whispers were afloat that Maltravers had grown wise, and changed his views: some remarks of his, more theoretical than practical, were quoted in favour of this notion. Parties too had much changed since Maltravers had appeared on the busy scene—new questions had arisen, and the old ones had died off.

Lord Raby and his party thought, that if Maltravers could be secured to them, no one would better suit their purpose. Political faction loves converts better even than consistent adherents. A man's rise in life generally dates from a well-timed *rat*. His high reputation—his provincial rank as the representative of the oldest commoner's family

in the county—his age, which combined the energy of one period with the experience of another—all united to accord him a preference over richer men. Lord Raby had been pointedly courteous and flattering to the master of Burleigh; and he now contrived it so, that the brilliant entertainment he was about to give might appear in compliment to a distinguished neighbour, returned to fix his residence on his patrimonial property, while in reality it might serve an electioneering purpose—serve to introduce Maltravers to the county, as if under his Lordship's own wing—and minister to political uses that went beyond the mere representation of the county.

Lord Vargrave had, during his stay at Merton rectory, paid several visits to Knaresdean, and held many private conversations with the Marquis: the result of these conversations was a close union of schemes and interests between the two noblemen. Dissatisfied with the political conduct of government, Lord Raby was

also dissatisfied, that, from various party reasons, a nobleman beneath himself in rank, and as he thought in influence, had obtained a preference in a recent vacancy among the Knights of the Garter. And if Vargrave had a talent in the world, it was in discovering the weak points of men whom he sought to gain, and making the vanities of others conduce to his own ambition.

The festivities of Knaresdean gave occasion to Lord Raby to unite at his house the more prominent of those who thought and acted in concert with Lord Vargrave; and in this secret senate, the operations for the following session were to be seriously discussed and gravely determined.

On the day which was to be concluded with the ball at Knaresdean, Lord Vargrave went before the rest of the Merton party, for he was engaged to dine with the Marquis.

On arriving at Knaresdean, Lumley found Lord Saxingham and some other politicians

who had arrived the preceding day, closeted with Lord Raby ; and Vargrave, who shone to yet greater advantage in the diplomacy of party management, than in the arena of Parliament, brought penetration, energy, and decision to timid and fluctuating councils. Lord Vargrave lingered in the room after the first bell had summoned the other guests to depart.

“ My dear Lord,” said he then, “ though no one would be more glad than myself to secure Maltravers to our side, I very much doubt whether you will succeed in doing so. On the one hand, he appears altogether disgusted with politics and parliament ; and, on the other hand, I fancy, that reports of his change of opinions are, if not wholly unfounded, very unduly coloured. Moreover, to do him justice, I think that he is not one to be blinded and flattered into the pale of a party ; and your bird will fly away, after you have wasted a bucket-full of salt on his tail.”

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“Very possibly,” said Lord Raby, laughing ; “you know him better than I do. But there are many purposes to serve in this matter—purposes too provincial to interest you. In the first place, we shall humble the Nelthorpe interest, merely by showing that we *do* think of a new member : secondly, we shall get up a manifestation of feeling that would be impossible, unless we were provided with a centre of attraction : thirdly, we shall rouse a certain emulation among other county gentlemen ; and if Maltravers decline, we shall have many applicants : and fourthly, suppose Maltravers has not changed his opinions, we shall make him suspected by the party he really does belong to, and which would be somewhat formidable if he were to head them. In fact, these are mere county tactics, that you can’t be expected to understand.”

“I see you are quite right : meanwhile you will at least have an opportunity (though I say it, who should not say it) to present to the

county one of the prettiest young ladies that ever graced the halls of Knaresdean."

"Ah, Miss Cameron! I have heard much of her beauty: you are a lucky fellow, Vargrave!—by the bye, are we to say any thing of the engagement?"

"Why, indeed, my dear Lord, it is now so publicly known, that it would be false delicacy to affect concealment."

"Very well; I understand."

"How long I have detained you—a thousand pardons!—I have but just time to dress. In four or five months I must remember to leave you a longer time for your toilet."

"Me—how!"

"Oh, the Duke of —— can't live long; and I always observe, that when a handsome man has the Garter, he takes a long time pulling up his stockings."

"Ha, ha! you are so droll, Vargrave."

"Ha, ha!—I must be off."

"The more publicity is given to this ar-

rangement, the more difficult for Evelyn to shy at the leap," muttered Vargrave to himself as he closed the door. "Thus do I make all things useful to myself!"

The dinner-party were assembled in the great drawing-room, when Maltravers and Cleveland, also invited guests to the banquet, were announced. Lord Raby received the former with marked *empressement*; and the stately Marchioness honoured him with her most gracious smile. Formal presentations to the rest of the guests were interchanged; and it was not till the circle was formally gone through that Maltravers perceived, seated by himself in a corner to which he had shrunk on the entrance of Maltravers, a grey-haired, solitary man—it was Lord Saxingham! The last time they had met was in the death-chamber of Florence; and the old man forgot, for the moment, the anticipated Dukedom, and the dreamed-of Premiership!—and his heart flew back to the grave of his only child!

They saluted each other—and shook hands in silence. And Vargrave—whose eye was on them—Vargrave, whose arts had made that old man childless, felt not a pang of remorse! Living ever in the future, Vargrave almost seemed to have lost his memory. He knew not what regret was. It is a condition of life with men thoroughly worldly—that they never look behind!

The signal was given: in due order the party were marshalled into the great hall—a spacious and lofty chamber, which had received its last alteration from the hand of Inigo Jones; though the massive ceiling, with its antique and grotesque masques, betrayed a much earlier date, and contrasted with the Corinthian pilasters that adorned the walls, and supported the music gallery—from which waved the flags of modern warfare and its mimeries. The Eagle of Napoleon, a token of the services of Lord Raby's brother (a distinguished cavalry officer in command at

Waterloo), in juxtaposition with a much gayer and more glittering banner, emblematic of the martial fame of Lord Raby himself, as Colonel of the B——shire volunteers!

The music pealed from the gallery—the plate glittered on the board—the ladies wore diamonds, and the gentlemen, who had them, wore stars. It was a very fine sight, that banquet!—such as became the festive day of a Lord Lieutenant, whose ancestors had now defied, and now inter-married with, Royalty. But there was very little talk, and no merriment. People at the top of the table drunk wine with those at the bottom; and gentlemen and ladies seated next to each other, whispered languidly in monosyllabic commune. On one side, Maltravers was flanked by a Lady Somebody Something, who was rather deaf, and very much frightened for fear he should talk Greek; on the other side he was relieved by Sir John Merton—very civil, very

pompous, and talking, at strictured intervals, about county matters, in a measured intonation, savouring of the House-of-Commons jerk at the end of the sentence.

As the dinner advanced to its close, Sir John became a little more diffuse, though his voice sunk into a whisper.

“ I fear there will be a split in the Cabinet before Parliament meets.”

“ Indeed !”

“ Yes ; Vargrave and the Premier cannot pull together very long. Clever man, Vargrave ! but he has not enough stake in the country for a leader !”

“ All men have public character to stake ; and if that be good, I suppose no stake can be better ?”

“ Humph !—yes—very true ; but still, when a man has land and money, his opinions, in a country like this, very properly carry more weight with them. If Vargrave, for instance, had Lord Raby's property, no man could be

more fit for a leader—a Prime Minister. We might then be sure that he would have no selfish interest to further ; he would not play tricks with his party—you understand ? ”

“ Perfectly.”

“ I am not a party man, as you may remember ; indeed, you and I have voted alike on the same questions. Measures, not men—that is my maxim ; but still I don’t like to see men placed above their proper stations.”

“ Maltravers—a glass of wine,” said Lord Vargrave across the table. “ Will you join us, Sir John ? ”

Sir John bowed.

“ Certainly,” he resumed, “ Vargrave is a pleasant man and a good speaker ; but still they say he is far from rich—embarrassed, indeed. However, when he marries Miss Cameron, it may make a great difference—give him more respectability ; do you know what her fortune is—something immense ? ”

“Yes; I believe so—I don’t know.”

“My brother says that Vargrave is most amiable. The young lady is very handsome, almost too handsome for a wife—don’t you think so? Beauties are all very well in a ball-room; but they are not calculated for domestic life. I am sure you agree with me. I have heard, indeed, that Miss Cameron is rather learned; but there is so much scandal in a country neighbourhood;—people are so ill-natured. I dare say she is not more learned than other young ladies, poor girl! What do you think?”

“Miss Cameron is—is very accomplished, I believe. And so you think the Government cannot stand?”

“I don’t say that—very far from it—but I fear there must be a change. However, if the country gentlemen hold together, I do not doubt but what we shall weather the storm. The landed interest, Mr. Maltravers, is the great stay of this country—the sheet anchor, I

may say. I suppose Lord Vargrave, who seems, I must say, to have right notions on this head, will invest Miss Cameron's fortune in land. But though one may buy an estate, one can't buy an old family, Mr. Maltravers!—you and I may be thankful for that. By the way, who was Miss Cameron's mother, Lady Vargrave?—something low, I fear—nobody knows."

"I am not acquainted with Lady Vargrave; your sister-in-law speaks of her most highly. And the daughter in herself is a sufficient guarantee for the virtues of the mother."

"Yes; and Vargrave, on one side, at least, has himself nothing in the way of family to boast of."

The ladies left the hall—the gentlemen re-seated themselves. Lord Raby made some remark on politics to Sir John Merton, and the whole round of talkers immediately followed their leader.

"It is a thousand pities, Sir John," said

Lord Raby, "that you have not a colleague more worthy of you; Nelthorpe never attends a committee, does he?"

"I cannot say that he is a very active member; but he is young, and we must make allowances for him," said Sir John discreetly; for he had no desire to oust his colleague—it was agreeable enough to be *the* efficient member.

"In these times," said Lord Raby, loftily, "allowances are not to be made for systematic neglect of duty; we shall have a stormy Session—the opposition is no longer to be despised — perhaps a dissolution may be nearer at hand than we think for:—as for Nelthorpe, he cannot come in again."

"That I am quite sure of," said a fat country gentleman of great weight in the county; "he not only was absent on the great Malt question, but he never answered my letter respecting the Canal Company."

"Not answered your letter!" said Lord

Raby, lifting up his hands and eyes in amaze and horror. "What conduct!—Ah, Mr. Maltravers, you are the man for us!"

"Hear! hear!" cried the fat squire.

"Hear!" echoed Vargrave; and the approving sound went round the table.

Lord Raby rose.—"Gentlemen, fill your glasses;—a health to our distinguished neighbour!"

The company applauded; each in his turn smiled, nodded, and drank to Maltravers, who, though taken by surprise, saw at once the course to pursue. He returned thanks, simply and shortly,—and, without pointedly noticing the allusion in which Lord Raby had indulged, remarked incidentally, that he had retired, certainly for some years—perhaps for ever—from political life.

Vargrave smiled significantly at Lord Raby, and hastened to lead the conversation into party discussion.—Wrapped in his proud dis-

dain of what he considered the contests of factions for toys and shadows, Maltravers remained silent ; and the party soon broke up, and adjourned to the ball-room.

CHAPTER III.

“Le plus grand défaut de la pénétration n'est pas de n'aller point jusqu'au but, c'est de le passer.”

LA ROCHEFAUCAULD.

EVELYN had looked forward to the Ball at Knaresdean with feelings deeper than those which usually inflame the fancy of a girl, proud of her dress, and confident of her beauty. Whether or not she *loved* Maltravers, in the true acceptance of the word *love*, it is certain that he had acquired a most powerful command over her mind and imagination. She felt the deepest interest in his welfare—the most anxious desire for his

esteem—the deepest regret at the thought of their estrangement. At Knaresdean she should meet Maltravers—in crowds it is true—but still she should meet him—she should see him towering superior above the herd—she should hear him praised—she should mark him, the observed of all. But there was another, and a deeper source of joy within her. A letter had been that morning received from Aubrey, in which he had announced his arrival for the next day. The letter, though affectionate, was short. Evelyn had been some months absent—Lady Vargrave was anxious to make arrangements for her return; but it was to be at her option, whether she would accompany the Curate home. Now, besides her delight at seeing once more the dear old man, and hearing from his lips that her mother was well and happy, Evelyn hailed in his arrival, the means of extricating herself from her position with Lord Vargrave. She would confide in him her increased repugnance

to that union—he would confer with Lord Vargrave; and then—and then—did there come once more the thought of Maltravers! No!—I fear it was not Maltravers—that called forth that smile and that sigh!—Strange girl, you know not your own mind;—but few of us, at your age, do!

In all the gaiety of hope, in the pride of dress and half conscious loveliness, Evelyn went with a light step into Caroline's room. Miss Merton had already dismissed her woman, and was seated by her writing-table, leaning her cheek thoughtfully on her hand.

“Is it time to go?” said she, looking up; “Well!—we shall put Papa, and the coachman, and the horses too, in excellent humour. How well you look! Really, Evelyn, you are indeed beautiful!”—and Caroline gazed with honest, but not unenvious admiration at the fairy form so rounded, and yet so delicate; and the face that seemed to blush at its own charms.

“ I am sure I can return the flattery,” said Evelyn, laughing bashfully.

“ Oh ! as for me, I am well enough in my way ; and hereafter I dare say we may be rival beauties. I hope we shall remain good friends, and rule the world with divided empire. Do you not long for the stir, and excitement, and ambition of London ?—for ambition is open to us as to men !

“ No, indeed,” replied Evelyn, smiling, “ I could be ambitious, indeed ; but it would not be for myself, but for——”

“ A husband perhaps ; well you will have ample scope for such sympathy. Lord Vargrave——”

“ Lord Vargrave again !” and Evelyn’s smile vanished, and she turned away.

“ Ah,” said Caroline, “ I should have made Vargrave an excellent wife—pity he does not think so ! As it is, I must set up for myself, and become a *maîtresse femme*.—So you think I look well to-night ? I am glad of it—Lord

Doltimore is one who will be guided by what other people say."

"You are not serious about Lord Doltimore?"

"Most sadly serious."

"Impossible; you could not speak so if you loved him."

"Loved him! no! but I intend to marry him."

Evelyn was revolted, but still incredulous.

"And you, too, will marry one whom you do not love?—'tis our fate—"

"Never!"

"We shall see."

Evelyn's heart was damped, and her spirits fell.

"Tell me now," said Caroline, pressing on the wrung withers,—“do you not think this excitement, partial and provincial though it be—the sense of beauty, the hope of conquest, the consciousness of power—better than the

dull monotony of the Devonshire cottage? be honest—”

“No, no, indeed!” answered Evelyn, tearfully and passionately: “one hour with my mother, one smile from her lips, were worth it all!”

“And in your visions of marriage, you think then of nothing but roses and doves,—love in a cottage!”

“Love *in a home*, no matter whether a palace or a cottage,” returned Evelyn.

“Home!” repeated Caroline bitterly;—“home!—home is the English synonym for the French *ennui*.—But I hear papa on the stairs.”

A Ball-room—what a scene of common-place! how hacknied in novels; how trite in ordinary life; and yet ball-rooms have a character and a sentiment of their own, for all tempers and all ages. Something in the lights—the crowd—the music—conduces to stir up many of the

thoughts that belong to fancy and romance. It is a melancholy scene to men after a certain age. It revives many of those lighter and more graceful images connected with the wandering desires of youth ; shadows that crossed us, and seemed love, but were not : having much of the grace and charm, but none of the passion and the tragedy, of love. So many of our earliest and gentlest recollections are connected with those chalked floors—and that music painfully gay—and those quiet nooks and corners, where the talk that hovers about the heart and does not touch it, has been held. Apart and unsympathizing in that austerer wisdom which comes to us after deep passions have been excited, we see form after form chasing the butterflies, that dazzle us no longer among the flowers that have evermore lost their fragrance.

Somehow or other, it is one of the scenes that remind us most forcibly of the loss of youth ! We are brought so closely in contact

with the young and with the short-lived pleasures that once pleased us, and have forfeited all bloom. Happy the man who turns from "the tinkling cymbal," and "the gallery of pictures," and can think of some watchful eye and some kind heart *at home*. But those who have no home—and they are a numerous tribe—never feel lonelier hermits, or sadder moralists, than in such a crowd.

Maltravers leaned abstractedly against the wall, and some such reflections perhaps passed within, as the plumes waved, and the diamonds glittered round him. Ever too proud to be vain, the *monstrari digito* had not flattered even in the commencement of his career. And now he heeded not the eyes that sought his look, nor the admiring murmur of lips anxious to be overheard. Affluent, well-born, unmarried, and still in the prime of life,—in the small circles of a province, Ernest Maltravers would in himself have been an object of interest to the diplomacy of mothers and daughters—and the

false glare of reputation necessarily deepened curiosity, and widened the range of speculators and observers.

Suddenly, however, a new object of attention excited new interest—new whispers ran through the crowd, and these awakened Maltravers from his reverie. He looked up, and beheld all eyes fixed upon one form! His own eyes encountered those of Evelyn Cameron!

It was the first time he had seen this beautiful young person in all the éclat, pomp, and circumstance of her station, as the heiress of the opulent Templeton—the first time he had seen her the cynosure of crowds—who, had her features been homely, would have admired the charms of her fortune in her face. And now, as radiant with youth, and the flush of excitement on her soft cheek, she met his eye, he said to himself—“And could I have wished one so new to the world, to have united her lot with a man, for whom all that to her is delight has grown wearisome and stale?”

Could I have been justified in stealing her from the admiration that, at her age, and to her sex, has so sweet a flattery? Or, on the other hand, could I have gone back to her years, and sympathized with feelings that time has taught me to despise?—Better as it is."

Influenced by these thoughts, the greeting of Maltravers disappointed and saddened Evelyn, she knew not why; it was constrained and grave.

"Does not Miss Cameron look well?" whispered Mrs. Merton, on whose arm the heiress leant. "You observe what a sensation she creates?"

Evelyn overheard, and blushed as she stole a glance at Maltravers. There was something mournful in the admiration which spoke in his deep, earnest eyes.

"Everywhere," said he, calmly, and in the same tone, "everywhere Miss Cameron appears, she must outshine all others." He

turned to Evelyn, and said with a smile, "you must learn to enure yourself to admiration—a year or two hence, and you will not blush at your own gifts!"

"And you, too, contribute to spoil me—fie!"

"Are you so easily spoiled?—If I meet you hereafter, you will think my compliments cold to the common language of others."

"You do not know me—perhaps you never will."

"I am contented with the fair pages I have already read."

"Where is Lady Raby?" asked Mrs. Merton. "Oh, I see—Evelyn, my love, we must present ourselves to our hostess."

The ladies moved on—and when Maltravers next caught a glance of Evelyn, she was with Lady Raby, and Lord Vargrave also was by her side.

The whispers round him had grown louder.

"Very lovely indeed!—so young too—and

she is really going to be married to Lord Vargrave: so much older than she is—quite a sacrifice!”

“ Scarcely so. He is so agreeable, and still handsome. But are you sure that the thing is settled ? ”

“ Oh, yes. Lord Raby himself told me so. It will take place very soon.”

“ But do you know who her mother was ?—I cannot make out.”

“ Nothing particular. You know the late Lord Vargrave was a man of low birth. I believe she was a widow of his own rank—she lives quite in seclusion.”

“ How d’ye do, Mr. Maltravers ? So glad to see you,” said the quick shrill voice of Mrs. Hare. “ Beautiful ball—nobody does things like Lord Raby—don’t you dance ? ”

“ No, Madam.”

“ Oh, you young gentlemen are so *fine* now-a-days.” (Mrs. Hare, laying stress on the word *young*, thought she had paid a very ele-

gant compliment, and ran on with increased complacency.)

“ You are going to let Burleigh, I hear, to Lord Doltimore—is it true?—No!—really now, what stories people do tell. Elegant man, Lord Doltimore! Is it true, that Miss Caroline is going to marry his Lordship?—Great match!—No scandal, I hope; you’ll excuse *me*! Two weddings on the *tapis*—quite stirring for our stupid county. Lady Vargrave and Lady Doltimore, two new Peeresses. Which ’do you think is the handsomest?—Miss Merton is the tallest, but there is something fierce in her eyes. Don’t you think so?—By-the-bye, I wish you joy—you’ll excuse *me*.”

“ Wish me joy, Madam!”

“ Oh, you are so close. Mr. Hare says he shall support you. You will have all the ladies with you. Well, I declare, Lord Vargrave is going to dance. How old is he, do you think?”

Maltravers uttered an audible *pshaw*, and moved away; but his penance was not over. Lord Vargrave, much as he disliked dancing, still thought it wise to ask the fair hand of Evelyn; and Evelyn, also, could not refuse.

And now, as the crowd gathered round the red ropes, Maltravers had to undergo new exclamations at Evelyn's beauty and Vargrave's luck. Impatiently he turned from the spot, with that gnawing sickness of the heart which none but the jealous know. He longed to depart, yet dreaded to do so. It was the last time he should see Evelyn, perhaps for years—the last time he should see her as Miss Cameron!

He passed into another room deserted by all save four old gentlemen—Cleveland one of them—immersed in whist; and threw himself upon an ottoman, placed in a recess by the oriel window. There, half concealed by the draperies, he communed and reasoned

with himself. His heart was sad within him; he never felt before *how* deeply and *how* passionately he loved Evelyn—how firmly that love had fastened upon the very core of his heart! Strange, indeed, it was in a girl so young—of whom he had but seen but little—and that little in positions of such quiet and ordinary interest—to excite a passion so intense in a man who had gone through strong emotions and stern trials! But all love is unaccountable. The solitude in which Maltravers had lived—the absence of all other excitement—perhaps had contributed largely to fan the flame. And his affections had so long slept; and after long sleep the passions wake with such giant strength! He felt now too well that the last rose of life had bloomed for him—it was blighted in its birth, but it could never be replaced. Henceforth, indeed, he should be alone—the hopes of home were gone for ever; and the other occupations of mind and

soul — literature, pleasure, ambition — were already forsworn at the very age in which by most men they are most indulged! Oh, Youth! begin not thy career too soon, and let one passion succeed in its due order to another — so that every season of life may have its appropriate pursuit and charm!

The hours waned—still Maltravers stirred not; nor were his meditations disturbed, except by occasional ejaculations from the four old gentlemen, as between each deal they moralized over the caprices of the cards.

At length, close beside him he heard that voice, the lightest sound of which could send the blood rushing through his veins—and from his retreat he saw Caroline and Evelyn, seated close by.

“ I beg pardon,” said the former, in a low voice—“ I beg pardon, Evelyn, for calling you away—but I longed to tell you. The die is cast.—Lord Doltimore has proposed,

and I have accepted him!—Alas, alas! I half wish I could retract!”

“Dearest Caroline!” said the silver voice of Evelyn; “for heaven’s sake, do not thus wantonly resolve on your own unhappiness!—you wrong yourself, Caroline!—you do, indeed!—You are not the vain, ambitious character you affect to be!—Ah! what is it you require—wealth?—are you not my friend?—am I not rich enough for both?—rank?—what can it give you to compensate for the misery of an union without love?—Pray forgive me for speaking thus; do not think me presumptuous, or romantic—but indeed, indeed, I know from my own heart what yours must undergo!”

Caroline pressed her friend’s hand with emotion.

“You are a bad comforter, Evelyn;—my mother—my father, will preach a very different doctrine. I am foolish, indeed, to be so sad.

in obtaining the very object I have sought! Poor Doltimore!—he little knows the nature, the feelings of her, whom he thinks he has made the happiest of her sex:—he little knows” — Caroline paused, turned pale as death, and then went rapidly on—“ But you, Evelyn, *you* will meet the same fate; we shall bear it together.”

“ No!—no!—do not think so!—Where I give my hand, there shall I give my heart.”

At this time Maltravers half rose, and sighed audibly.

“ Hush!” said Caroline in alarm—at the same moment the whist-table broke up—and Cleveland approached Maltravers.

“ I am at your service,” said he; “ I know you will not stay the supper. You will find me in the next room; I am just going to speak to Lord Saxingham.” The gallant old gentleman then paid a compliment to the young ladies, and walked away.

“ So, you too are a deserter from the ball-room ! ” said Miss Merton to Maltravers as she rose.

“ I am not very well ;—but do not let me frighten you away.”

“ Oh, no ! I hear the music—it is the last quadrille before supper—and here is my fortunate partner looking for me.”

“ I have been everywhere in search of you,” said Lord Doltimore, in an accent of tender reproach ; “ come, we are almost too late now.”

Caroline put her arm into Lord Doltimore’s, who hurried her into the ball-room.

Miss Cameron looked irresolute whether or not to follow, when Maltravers seated himself beside her ;—and the paleness of his brow, and something that bespoke pain in the compressed lip—went at once to her heart. In her childlike tenderness, she would have given worlds for the sister’s privilege of sympathy and soothing. The room was now deserted—they were alone.

The words that he had overheard from Evelyn's lips—"where I shall give my hand there shall I give my heart"—Maltravers interpreted, but in one sense—"she loved her betrothed!"—and, strange as it may seem, at that thought which put the last seal upon his fate, selfish anguish was less felt, than deep compassion. So young—so courted—so tempted as she must be—and with such a protector!—the cold, the unsympathizing, the heartless Vargrave! She, too, whose feelings, so warm, ever trembled on her lip and eye—Oh! when she awoke from her dream, and knew whom she had loved, what might be her destiny—what her danger!

"Miss Cameron," said Maltravers, "let me for one moment detain you; I will not trespass long. May I once, and for the last time, assume the austere rights of friendship? I have seen much of life, Miss Cameron; and my experience has been purchased dearly: and, harsh and hermit-like as I may have

grown, I have not outlived such feelings as you are well formed to excite. Nay,"—(and Maltravers smiled sadly)—"I am not about to compliment or flatter—I speak not to you as the young to the young; the difference of our years that takes away sweetness from flattery—leaves still sincerity to friendship. You have inspired me with a deep interest;—deeper than I thought that living beauty could ever rouse in me again! It may be, that something in the tone of your voice, your manner, a nameless grace that I cannot define—reminds me of one whom I knew in youth;—one who had not your advantages of education, wealth, birth; but to whom Nature was more kind than Fortune."

He paused a moment; and, without looking towards Evelyn, thus renewed:—

"You are entering life under brilliant auspices.—Ah! let me hope that the noonday will keep the promise of the dawn! You are susceptible—imaginative; do not demand too

much, or dream too fondly. When you are wedded, do not imagine that wedded life is exempt from its trials and its cares: if you know yourself beloved—and beloved you must be—do not ask from the busy and anxious spirit of man, all which Romance promises, and Life but rarely yields. And oh!” continued Maltravers, with an absorbing and earnest passion, that poured forth its language with almost breathless rapidity;—“if ever your heart rebels—if ever it be dissatisfied—fly the false sentiment as a sin!—Thrown, as from your rank you must be, on a world of a thousand perils, with no guide so constant, and so safe, as your own innocence—make not that world too dear a friend! Were it possible that your own home ever could be lonely or unhappy, reflect that to woman the unhappiest home is happier than all excitement abroad. You will have a thousand suitors, hereafter:—believe that the asp lurks under the flatterer’s tongue—and resolve, come

what may, to be contented with your lot. How many have I known, lovely and pure as you, who have suffered the very affections—the very beauty of their nature to destroy them! Listen to me as a warner—as a brother—as a pilot who has passed the seas on which your vessel is about to launch. And ever—ever let me know, in whatever lands your name may reach me, that one who has brought back to me all my faith in human excellence, while the idol of our sex is the glory of her own. Forgive me this strange impertinence; my heart is full, and has overflowed. And now, Miss Cameron—Evelyn Cameron—this is my last offence, and my last farewell!”

He held out his hand, and involuntarily, unknowingly, she clasped it, as if to detain him till she could summon words to reply. Suddenly he heard Lord Vargrave's voice behind—the spell was broken—the next moment Evelyn was alone, and the throng swept

into the room towards the banquet, and laughter and gay voices were heard—and Lord Vargrave was again by Evelyn's side!

CHAPTER IV.

“—— To you
This journey is devoted.”

Lover's Progress, Act iv. Scene 1.

As Cleveland and Maltravers returned homeward, the latter abruptly checked the cheerful garrulity of his friend:—“I have a favour—a great favour to ask of you.”

“And what is that?”

“Let us leave Burleigh to-morrow; I care not at what hour; we need go but two or three stages if you are fatigued.”

“Most hospitable host! and why?”

“It is torture, it is agony to me, to breathe the air of Burleigh,” cried Maltravers wildly:

—"Can you not guess my secret? Have I then concealed it so well?—I love, I adore Evelyn Cameron, and she is betrothed to—she loves—another!"

Mr. Cleveland was breathless with amaze; Maltravers had indeed so well concealed his secret; and now his emotion was so impetuous, that it startled and alarmed the old man, who had never himself experienced a passion, though he had indulged a sentiment. He sought to console and soothe; but after the first burst of agony, Maltravers recovered himself, and said, gently—

"Let us never return to this subject again: it is right that I should conquer this madness, and conquer it I will!—now you know my weakness, you will indulge it. My cure cannot commence, until I can no longer see, from my casements, the very roof that shelters the affianced bride of another."

"Certainly, then, we will set off to-morrow: my poor friend! is it indeed——"

"Ah, cease," interrupted the proud man—"no compassion I implore—give me but time and silence—they are the only remedies."

Before noon the next day, Burleigh was once more deserted by its lord. As the carriage drove through the village, Mrs. Elton saw it from her open window. But her patron, too absorbed at that hour, even for benevolence, forgot her existence: and yet so complicated are the webs of fate, that in the breast of that lowly stranger was locked a secret of the most vital moment to Maltravers.

"Where is he going? where is the Squire going?" asked Mrs. Elton, anxiously.

"Dear heart!" said the cottager, "they do say he be going for a short time to foren parts. But he will be back at Christmas."

"And at Christmas I may be gone hence for ever:" muttered the invalid, "But what will that matter to him—to any one?"

At the first stage, Maltravers and his friend were detained a short time for the want of

horses. Lord Raby's house had been filled with guests on the preceding night, and the stables of this little inn, dignified with the sign of the Raby Arms, and about two miles distant from the great man's place, had been exhausted, by numerous claimants returning homeward from Knaresdean. It was a quiet, solitary, post-house, and patience, till some jaded horses should return, was the only remedy—the host, assuring the travellers that he expected four horses every moment, invited them within. The morning was cold, and the fire not unacceptable to Mr. Cleveland—so they went into the little parlour. Here they found an elderly gentleman of very prepossessing appearance, who was waiting for the same object. He moved courteously from the fire-place as the travellers entered, and pushed the B—shire Chronicle towards Cleveland: Cleveland bowed urbanely—"A cold day, Sir—the autumn begins to show itself."

"It is true, Sir," answered the old gentle-

man, "and I feel the cold the more, having just quitted the genial atmosphere of the South."

"Of Italy?"

"No, of England only—I see by this paper (I am not much of a politician) that there is a chance of a dissolution of Parliament, and that Mr. Maltravers is likely to come forward for this county—are you acquainted with him, Sir?"

"A little," said Cleveland, smiling.

"He is a man I am much interested in," said the old gentleman—"and I hope soon to be honoured with his acquaintance."

"Indeed! and you are going into his neighbourhood?" asked Cleveland, looking more attentively at the stranger, and much pleased with a certain simple candour in his countenance and manner.

"Yes, to Merton Rectory."

Maltravers who had been hitherto stationed by the window, turned round.

"To Merton Rectory?" repeated Cleveland—"You are acquainted with Mr. Merton then?"

"Not yet, but I know some of his family. However, my visit is rather to a young lady who is staying at the Rectory—Miss Cameron."

Maltravers sighed heavily; and the old gentleman looked at him curiously:—"Perhaps, Sir, if you know that neighbourhood, you may have seen——"

"Miss Cameron! Certainly, it is an honour not easily forgotten."

The old gentleman looked pleased.

"The dear child," said he, with a burst of honest affection—and he passed his hand over his eyes—Maltravers drew near to him.

"You know Miss Cameron—you are to be envied, Sir," said he.

"I have known her since she was a child—Lady Vargrave is my dearest friend."

"Lady Vargrave must be worthy of such a

daughter. Only under the light of a sweet disposition and pure heart, could that beautiful nature have been trained and reared."

Maltravers spoke with enthusiasm; and, as if fearful to trust himself more, left the room.

"That gentleman speaks not more warmly than justly," said the old man with some surprise. "He has a countenance, which, if physiognomy be a true science, declares his praise to be no common compliment—may I inquire his name?"

"Maltravers," replied Cleveland, a little vain of the effect his ex-pupil's name was to produce.

The Curate—for it was he—started and changed countenance.

"Maltravers! but he is not about to leave the county?"

"Yes, for a few months."

Here the host entered. Four horses, that had been only fourteen miles, had just re-entered the yard. If Mr. Maltravers could

spare two to that gentleman, who had, indeed, pre-engaged them?

“Certainly,” said Cleveland; “but be quick.”

“And is Lord Vargrave still at Mr. Merton’s?” asked the Curate musingly.

“Oh, yes—I believe so. Miss Cameron is to be married to him very shortly—is it not so?”

“I cannot say,” returned Aubrey, rather bewildered. “You know Lord Vargrave, Sir?”

“Extremely well!”

“And you think him worthy of Miss Cameron?”

“That is a question for her to answer. But I see the horses are put-to. Good day, Sir! Will you tell your fair young friend that you have met an old gentleman who wishes her all happiness; and if she ask you his name—say Cleveland?”

So saying Mr. Cleveland bowed, and re-entered the carriage. But Maltravers was yet

missing. In fact, he returned to the house by the back way, and went once more into the little parlour. It was something to see again one who would so soon see Evelyn!

“If I mistake not,” said Maltravers, “you are that Mr. Aubrey on whose virtues I have often heard Miss Cameron delight to linger? Will you believe my regret that our acquaintance is now so brief?”

As Maltravers spoke thus simply, there was in his countenance—his voice—a melancholy sweetness, which greatly conciliated the good Curate. And as Aubrey gazed upon his noble features and lofty mien, he no longer wondered at the fascination he had appeared to exercise over the young Evelyn.

“And may I not hope, Mr. Maltravers,” said he, “that before long our acquaintance may be renewed? Could not Miss Cameron,” he added with a smile and a penetrating look, “tempt you into Devonshire?”

Maltravers shook his head; and, muttering

something not very audible, quitted the room. The Curate heard the whirl of the wheels; and the host entered to inform him that his own carriage was now ready.

“There is something in this,” thought Aubrey, “which I do not comprehend. His manner—his trembling voice—bespoke emotions he struggled to conceal. Can Lord Vargrave have gained his point?—Is Evelyn indeed no longer free?”

CHAPTER V.

“ Certes, c’est un grand cas, Icas
 Que toujours tracas ou fracas
 Vous faites d’une ou d’autre sort ;
 C’est le diable qui vous emporte ! ”

VOITURE.

LORD Vargrave had passed the night of the ball and the following morning at Knaresdean. It was necessary to bring the councils of the scheming conclave to a full and definite conclusion ; and this was at last effected. Their strength numbered—friends and foes alike canvassed and considered—and, due account taken of the waverers to be won over, it really did seem, even to the least sanguine, that the Saxingham, or Vargrave party, was

one that might well aspire either to dictate to, or to break up, a Government. Nothing now was left to consider, but the favourable hour for action. In high spirits, Lord Vargrave returned about the middle of the day to the Rectory.

“ So,” thought he, as he reclined in his carriage—“ so, in politics the prospect clears as the sun breaks out. The party I have espoused is one that must be most durable, for it possesses the greatest property and the most stubborn prejudice—what elements for Party ! All that I now require is a sufficient fortune to back my ambition. Nothing can clog my way but these cursed debts—this disreputable want of gold. And yet Evelyn alarms me ! Were I younger—or had I not made my position too soon—I would marry her by fraud or by force ; run off with her to Gretna, and make Vulcan minister to Plutus ! But this would never do at my years, and with my reputation. A pretty story for the news-

papers!—d—n them! Well, nothing venture, nothing have—I will brave the hazard! Meanwhile, Doltimore is mine—Caroline will rule him; and I rule her. His vote and his boroughs are something—his money will be more immediately useful: I must do him the honour to borrow a few thousands—Caroline must manage that for me. The fool is miserly, though a spendthrift; and looked black when I delicately hinted, the other day, that I wanted a friend—*id est*—a loan! Money and friendship same thing—distinction without a difference!” Thus cogitating, Vargrave whiled away the minutes till his carriage stopped at Mr. Merton’s door.

As he entered the hall he met Caroline, who had just quitted her own room.

“How lucky I am that you have on your bonnet! I long for a walk with you round the lawn.”

“And I, too, am glad to see you, Lord

Vargrave," said Caroline, putting her arm in his.

"Accept my best congratulations, my own sweet friend," said Vargrave, when they were in the grounds. "You have no idea how happy Doltimore is—he came to Knaresdean yesterday to communicate the news, and his neckcloth was primmer than ever—*C'est un bon enfant.*"

"Ah, how can you talk thus?—do you feel no pain at the thought, that—that I am another's?"

"Your heart will be ever mine—and that is the true fidelity—what else, too, could be done? As for Lord Doltimore, we will go shares in him—*Craps half!* as we used to say at school. Come, cheer thee, *m' amie*—I rattle on thus to keep up your spirits. Do not fancy I am happy!"

Caroline let fall a few tears; but, beneath the influence of Vargrave's sophistries and

flatteries, she gradually recovered her usual hard and worldly tone of mind.

“ And where is Evelyn ? ” asked Vargrave.
“ Do you know the little witch seemed to me half mad the night of the ball. Her head was turned : and when she sate next me at supper she not only answered every question I put to her *à tort et à travers*, but I fancied every moment she was going to burst out crying. Can you tell what was the matter with her ? ”

“ She was grieved to hear that I was to be married to the man I do not love. Ah, Vargrave ! she has more heart than you have.”

“ But she never fancies that you love me ? ” asked Lumley, in alarm—“ You women are so confoundedly confidential ! ”

“ No—she does not suspect our secret.”

“ Then I scarcely think your approaching marriage was a sufficient cause for so much distraction.”

“ Perhaps she may have overheard some of the impertinent whispers about her mother,

—‘who was Lady Vargrave’—and ‘what Cameron was Lady Vargrave’s first husband?’—*I* overheard a hundred such vulgar questions, and provincial people whisper so loud.”

“ Ah, that is a very probable solution of the mystery. And for my part, I am almost as much puzzled as any one else can be, to know who Lady Vargrave was ! ”

“ Did not your uncle tell you ? ”

“ He told me, that she was of no very elevated birth and station, nothing more ; and she herself, with her quiet, say-nothing-manner, slips through all my careless questionings, like an eel. She is still a beautiful creature, more regularly handsome than even Evelyn ; and old Templeton had a very sweet tooth at the back of his head, though he never opened his mouth wide enough to show it.”

“ She must ever at least have been blameless, to judge by an air, which even now, is more like that of a child than a matron.”

“ Yes—she has not much of the widow about her, poor soul! But her education, except in music, has not been very carefully attended to; and she knows about as much of the world as the Bishop of Autun (better known as Prince Talleyrand) knows of the Bible. If she were not so simple, she would be silly; but silliness is never simple—always cunning; however, there is some cunning in her keeping her past Cameronian Chronicles so close. Perhaps I may know more about her in a short time, for I intend going to C*****, where my uncle once lived, in order to see if I can revive, under the rose—since peers are only contraband electioneerers—his old parliamentary influence in that city; and they may tell me more there than I now know.”

“ Did the late Lord marry at C*****?”

“ No—in Devonshire. I do not even know if Mrs. Cameron ever was at C*****.”

“ You must be curious to know who the father of your intended wife was ? ”

“ Her father ! No—I have no curiosity in that quarter. And, to tell you the truth, I am much too busy about the Present to be raking into that heap of rubbish we call the Past. I fancy that both your good grandmother, and that comely old Curate of Brook Green, know everything about Lady Vargrave; and, as they esteem her so much, I take it for granted she is *sans tâche*.”

“ How could I be so stupid ?—à propos of the Curate, I forgot to tell you that he is here. He arrived about two hours ago, and has been closeted with Evelyn ever since ! ”

“ The 'deuce ! What brought the old man hither ? ”

“ That I know not. Papa received a letter from him yesterday morning, to say that he would be here to-day. Perhaps Lady Vargrave thinks it time for Evelyn to return home.”

“What am I to do?” said Vargrave, anxiously—“Dare I yet venture to propose?”

“I am sure it will be in vain, Vargrave. You must prepare for disappointment.”

“And ruin,” muttered Vargrave, gloomily. “Hark you, Caroline,—she may refuse me if she pleases. But I am not a man to be baffled. Have her I will, by one means or another—revenge urges me to it almost as much as ambition. That girl’s thread of life has been the dark line in my woof—she has robbed me of fortune—she now thwarts me in my career—she humbles me in my vanity. But, like a hound that has tasted blood, I will run her down, whatever winding she takes!”

“Vargrave, you terrify me! Reflect; we do not live in an age when violence—”

“Tush!” interrupted Lumley, with one of those dark looks which at times, though very rarely, swept away all its customary character from that smooth, shrewd countenance. “Tush!—we live in an age as favourable to intellect

and to energy, as ever was painted in romance. I have that faith in fortune and myself that I tell you, with a prophet's voice, that Evelyn shall fulfil the wish of my dying uncle. But the bell summons us back."

On returning to the house, Lord Vargrave's valet gave him a letter, which had arrived that morning. It was from Mr. Gustavus Douce, and ran thus:—

" Fleet Street, ——— 20th, 18—.

" MY LORD,

" It is with the greatest regret that I apprise you, for Self and Co., that we shall not be able in the present state of the Money Market to renew your Lordship's bill for 10,000*l*., due the 28th instant. Respectfully calling your Lordship's attention to same,

" I have the honour to be,

" For Self and Co., my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

" and most obliged humble Servant,

" GUSTAVUS DOUCE.

To the Right Hon. the Lord Vargrave,

&c. &c."

This letter sharpened Lord Vargrave's anxiety and resolve; nay, it seemed almost to sharpen his sharp features as he muttered sundry denunciations on Messrs. Douce and Co., while arranging his neckcloth at the glass.

CHAPTER VI.

SOL.—“Why, please your honourable Lordship, we were talking here and there—this and that.”

The Stranger.

AUBREY had been closeted with Evelyn the whole morning; and, simultaneous with his arrival, came to her the news of the departure of Maltravers: it was an intelligence that greatly agitated and unnerved her: and, coupling that event with his solemn words on the previous night, Evelyn asked herself, in wonder, what sentiments she could have inspired in Maltravers. Could he love her?—her, so young—so inferior—so uninformed!—

Impossible! Alas!—alas!—for Maltravers! his genius—his gifts—his towering qualities—all that won the admiration, almost the awe, of Evelyn—placed him at a distance from her heart! When she asked herself if he loved her, she did not ask, even in that hour, if she loved him. But even the question she did ask her judgment answered erringly in the negative—why should he love, and yet fly her? She understood not his high-wrought scruples—his self-deluding belief. Aubrey was more puzzled than enlightened by his conversation with his pupil; only one thing seemed certain—her delight to return to the cottage and her mother.

Evelyn could not sufficiently recover her composure to mix with the party below; and Aubrey, at the sound of the second dinner-bell, left her to solitude, and bore her excuses to Mrs. Merton.

“Dear me!” said that worthy lady; “I am so sorry—I thought Miss Cameron looked

fatigued at breakfast ; and there was something hysterical in her spirits ; and I suppose the surprise of your arrival has upset her. Caroline, my dear, you had better go and see what she would like to have taken up to her room—a little soup, and the wing of a chicken.”

“ My dear,” said Mr. Merton, rather pompously, “ I think it would be but a proper respect to Miss Cameron, if you yourself accompanied Caroline.”

“ I assure you,” said the Curate, alarmed at the avalanche of politeness that threatened poor Evelyn, “ I assure you that Miss Cameron would prefer being left alone at present ; as you say, Mrs. Merton, her spirits are rather agitated.”

But Mrs. Merton, with a sliding bow, had already quitted her room, and Caroline with her.

“ Come back, Sophy !—Cecilia, come back !” said Mr. Merton, settling his *jabot*.

“ Oh, dear Evy ! poor dear Evy !—Evy is ill !” said Sophy ; “ I may go to Evy !—I must go, Papa ! ”

“ No, my dear, you are too noisy ; these children are quite spoiled, Mr. Aubrey.”

The old man looked at them benevolently, and drew them to his knee ; and, while Cissy stroked his long white hair, and Sophy ran on about dear Evy’s prettiness and goodness, Lord Vargrave sauntered into the room.

On seeing the Curate, his frank face lighted up with surprise and pleasure ; he hastened to him—seized him by both hands—expressed the most heartfelt delight at seeing him—inquired tenderly after Lady Vargrave—and, not till he was out of breath, and Mrs. Merton and Caroline returning apprised him of Miss Cameron’s indisposition, did his rapture vanish ; and, as a moment before he was all joy, so now he was all sorrow.

The dinner passed off dully enough ; the children, re-admitted to dessert, made a little

relief to all parties ; and, when they and the two ladies went, Aubrey himself quickly rose to rejoin Evelyn.

“ Are you going to Miss Cameron ? ” said Lord Vargrave ; “ pray say how unhappy I feel at her illness. I think these grapes—they are very fine—could not hurt her. May I ask you to present them, with my best—best and most anxious regards ? I shall be so uneasy till you return. Now, Merton (as the door closed on the Curate), let’s have another bottle of this famous claret !—Droll old fellow, that !—quite a character ! ”

“ He is a great favourite with Lady Vargrave and Miss Cameron, I believe,” said Mr. Merton. “ A mere village priest, I suppose ; no talent, no energy—or he could not be a curate at that age.”

“ Very true ; — a shrewd remark. The church is as good a profession as any other for getting on, if a man has anything in him. I shall live to see *you* a bishop ! ”

Mr. Merton shook his head.

“ Yes, I shall ; though you have hitherto disdained to exhibit any one of the three orthodox qualifications for a mitre.”

“ And what are they, my Lord ? ”

“ Editing a Greek play—writing a political pamphlet—and apostatizing at the proper moment.”

“ Ha ! ha ! your Lordship is severe on us.”

“ Not I. I often wish I had been brought up to the Church—famous profession, properly understood. By Jupiter, I should have been a capital bishop ! ”

In his capacity of parson, Mr. Merton tried to look grave ;—in his capacity of a gentlemanlike, liberal fellow, he gave up the attempt, and laughed pleasantly at the joke of the rising man.

CHAPTER VII.

“Will nothing please you?”

What do you think of the Court?”

The Plain Dealer.

ON one subject, Aubrey found no difficulty in ascertaining Evelyn's wishes and condition of mind. The experiment of her visit, so far as Vargrave's hopes were concerned, had utterly failed;—she could not contemplate the prospect of his alliance, and she poured out to the Curate, frankly and fully, all her desire to effect a release from her engagement. As it was now settled that she should return with Aubrey to Brook Green, it was indeed necessary to come to the long-delayed understand-

ing with her betrothed. Yet this was difficult, for he had so little pressed—so distantly alluded to—their engagement, that it was like a forwardness, an indelicacy in Evelyn, to forestall the longed-for, yet dreaded explanation. This, however, Aubrey took upon himself; and at this promise Evelyn felt as the slave may feel when the chain is stricken off.

At breakfast, Mr. Aubrey communicated to the Mertons Evelyn's intention to return with him to Brook Green, on the following day. Lord Vargrave started—bit his lip—but said nothing.

Not so silent was Mr. Merton:—

“Return with you! my dear Mr. Aubrey—just consider—it is impossible—you see Miss Cameron's rank of life, her position—so very strange—no servants of her own here but her woman—no carriage even! You would not have her travel in a post-chaise—such a long journey! Lord Vargrave, you can never consent to that, I am sure?”

“Were it only as Miss Cameron’s *guardian*,” said Lord Vargrave, pointedly, “I should certainly object to such a mode of performing such a journey. Perhaps Mr. Aubrey means to perfect the project by taking two outside places on the top of the coach?”

“Pardon me,” said the Curate, mildly—“but I am not so ignorant of what is due to Miss Cameron as you suppose. Lady Vargrave’s carriage which brought me hither, will be no unsuitable vehicle for Lady Vargrave’s daughter; and Miss Cameron is not, I trust, quite so spoilt by all your friendly attentions, as to be unable to perform a journey of two days, with no other protector than myself.”

“I forgot Lady Vargrave’s carriage, or rather I was not aware that you had used it, my dear Sir,” said Mr. Merton:—“but you must not blame us, if we are sorry to lose Miss Cameron so suddenly: I was in hopes that *you* too would stay at least a week with us.”

The Curate bowed at the Rector’s conde-

scending politeness ; and just as he was about to answer, Mrs. Merton put in—

“And you see I had set my heart on her being Caroline’s bridesmaid.”

Caroline turned pale, and glanced at Vargrave, who appeared solely absorbed in breaking toast into his tea—a delicacy he had never before been known to favour.

There was an awkward pause—the servant opportunely entered with a small parcel of books—a note to Mr. Merton—and that most blessed of all blessed things in the country, the letter-bag.

“What is this ?” said the Rector, opening his note ; while Mrs. Merton unlocked the bag and dispensed the contents ;—“Left Burleigh for some months—a day or two sooner than he had expected—excuse French leave-taking—returns Miss Merton’s books—much obliged—gamekeeper has orders to place the Burleigh preserves at my disposal.—So we have lost our neighbour !”

“Did you not know Mr. Maltravers was gone?” said Caroline—“I heard so from Jenkins last night—he accompanies Mr. Cleveland to Paris.”

“Indeed!” said Mrs. Merton, opening her eyes—“What could take him to Paris?”

“Pleasure, I suppose,” answered Caroline—“I’m sure I should rather have wondered what could detain him at Burleigh.”

Vargrave was all this while breaking open seals, and running his eyes over sundry scrawls with the practised rapidity of the man of business; he came to the last letter—his countenance brightened—

“Royal invitation, or rather command, to Windsor,” he cried—“I am afraid I, too, must leave you—this very day—”

“Bless me!” exclaimed Mrs. Merton, “is that from the King? Do let me see!”

“Not exactly from the King; the same thing, though:” and Lord Vargrave, carelessly pushing the gracious communication towards

the impatient hand and loyal gaze of Mrs. Merton, carefully put the other letters in his pocket, and walked musingly to the window.

Aubrey seized the opportunity to approach him—"My Lord, can I speak with you a few moments?"

"Me! certainly: will you come to my dressing-room?"

CHAPTER VIII.

“————— There was never
Poor gentleman had such a sudden fortune.”

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER,
The Captain, Act V, Scene 5.

“MY LORD,” said the Curate, as Vargrave, leaning back in his chair, appeared to examine the shape of his boots; while, in reality, his ‘sidelong looks,’ not ‘of love,’ were fixed upon his companion—“ I need scarcely refer to the wish of the late Lord, your uncle, relative to Miss Cameron and yourself; nor need I, to one of a generous spirit, add, that such an engagement could be only so far binding as both the parties, whose happiness it concerned,

should be willing in proper time and season to fulfil it."

"Sir!" said Vargrave, impatiently waving his hand; and, in his irritable surmise of what was to come, losing his habitual self-control—"I know not what all this has to do with you;—surely you trespass upon ground sacred to Miss Cameron and myself. Whatever you have to say, let me beg you to come at once to the point."

"My Lord, I will obey you. Miss Cameron—and, I may add, with Lady Vargrave's consent—deputes me to say that, although she feels compelled to decline the honour of your Lordship's alliance, yet, if in any arrangement of the fortune bequeathed to her, she could testify to you, my Lord, her respect and friendship, it would afford her the most sincere gratification."

Lord Vargrave started.

"Sir," said he, "I know not if I am to thank you for this information—the announce-

ment of which so strangely coincides with your arrival. But allow me to say, that there needs no ambassador between Miss Cameron and myself. It is due, Sir, to my station—to my relationship—to my character of guardian—to my long and faithful affection—to all considerations which men of the world understand—which men of feeling sympathise with—to receive from Miss Cameron alone the rejection of my suit!”

“Unquestionably Miss Cameron will grant your Lordship the interview you have a right to seek; but pardon me, I thought it might save you both much pain, if the meeting were prepared by a third person; and on any matter of business—any atonement to your Lordship—”

“Atonement!—what can atone to me?” exclaimed Vargrave, as he walked to and fro the room in great disorder and excitement. “Can you give me back years of hope and expectancy—the manhood wasted in a vain dream?”

Had I not been taught to look to this reward, should I have rejected all occasion—while my youth was not yet all gone—while my heart was not yet all occupied—to form a suitable alliance? Nay, should I have indulged in a high and stirring career, for which my own fortune is by no means qualified? Atonement!—atonement! Talk of atonement to boys! Sir! I stand before you a man whose private happiness is blighted—whose public prospects are darkened—life wasted—fortunes ruined—the schemes of an existence, built upon one hope, which was lawfully indulged, overthrown!—and you talk to me of *atonement*!”

Selfish as the nature of this complaint might be—Aubrey was struck with its justice.

“My Lord,” said he, a little embarrassed, “I cannot deny that there is truth in much of what you say. Alas! it proves how vain it is for man to calculate on the future, how unhappily your uncle erred in imposing conditions, which the chances of life, and the

caprices of affection, could at any time dissolve ! But this is blame that attaches only to the dead—can you blame the living ?”

“ Sir, I considered myself bound by my uncle’s prayer to keep my hand and heart disengaged, that this title — miserable and barren distinction though it be !—might, as he so ardently desired, descend to Evelyn. I had a right to expect similar honour upon her side !”

“ Surely, my Lord, you, to whom the late Lord on his death-bed confided all the motives of his conduct and the secret of his life, cannot but be aware that, while desirous of promoting your worldly welfare, and uniting, in one line, his rank and his fortune,—your uncle still had Evelyn’s happiness at heart as his warmest wish ;—you must know that, if that happiness were forfeited by a marriage with you, the marriage became but a secondary consideration. Lord Vargrave’s will in itself was a proof of this. He did not impose, as an

absolute condition, upon Evelyn, her union with yourself;—he did not make the forfeiture of her whole wealth the penalty of her rejection of that alliance. By the definite limit of the forfeit, he intimated a distinction between a command and a desire. And surely, when you consider all circumstances, your Lordship must think that, what with that forfeit and the estate settled upon the title; your uncle did all that in a worldly point of view, equity, and even affection, could exact from him.”

Vargrave smiled bitterly, but said nothing.

“And if this be doubted, I have clearer proof of his intentions. Such was his confidence in Lady Vargrave, that, in the letter he addressed to her before his death—and which I now submit to your Lordship—you will observe that he not only expressly leaves it to Lady Vargrave’s discretion to communicate to Evelyn that history of which she is at present ignorant, but that he also clearly defines the line of conduct he wished to be adopted with respect to Evelyn

and yourself. Permit me to point out the passage."

Impatiently Lord Vargrave ran his eye over the letter placed in his hands, till he came to these lines:—

"And if, when she has arrived at the proper age to form a judgment, Evelyn should decide against Lumley's claims, you know that on no account would I sacrifice her happiness; all that I require is, that fair play be given to his pretensions—due indulgence to the scheme I have long had at heart. Let her be brought up to consider him her future husband—let her not be prejudiced against him—let her fairly judge for herself, when the time arrives."

"You see, my Lord," said Mr. Aubrey, as he took back the letter, "that this bears the same date as your uncle's will. What he desired has been done. Be just, my Lord—be just, and exonerate us all from blame—who can dictate to the affections?"

“And I am to understand that I have no chance, now or hereafter, of obtaining the affections of Evelyn? Surely, at your age, Mr. Aubrey, you cannot encourage the heated romance common to all girls of Evelyn’s age. Persons of our rank do not marry like the Corydon and Phillis of a pastoral. At my years, I never was fool enough to expect that I should inspire a girl of seventeen with what is called a passionate attachment. But happy marriages are based upon suitable circumstances, mutual knowledge and indulgence, respect, esteem. Come, Sir, let me hope yet—let me hope that, on the same day, I may congratulate you on your preferment, and you may congratulate me upon my marriage.”

Vargrave said this with a cheerful and easy smile; and the tone of his voice was that of a man who wished to convey serious meaning in a jesting accent.

Mr. Aubrey, meek as he was, felt the insult of the hinted bribe, and coloured with

a resentment no sooner excited than checked.
“ Excuse me, my Lord, I have now said all
—the rest had better be left to your ward
herself.”

“ Be it so, Sir. I will ask you, then, to
convey my request to Evelyn to honour me
with a last and parting interview.”

Vargrave flung himself on his chair, and
Aubrey left him.

CHAPTER IX.

“Thus airy Strephon tuned his lyre.”

SHENSTONE.

IN his meeting with Evelyn, Vargrave certainly exerted to the utmost all his ability and all his art. He felt that violence, that sarcasm, that selfish complaint would not avail, in a man who was not loved,—though they are often admirable cards in the hands of a man who is. As his own heart was perfectly untouched in the matter, except by rage and disappointment — feelings which with him never lasted very long—he could play coolly his losing game. His keen and ready intellect

taught him that all he could now expect, was to bequeath sentiments of generous compassion, and friendly interest; to create a favourable impression, which he might hereafter improve; to reserve, in short, some spot of 'vantage-ground in the country, from which he was to affect to withdraw all his forces. He had known, in his experience of women, which, whether as an actor or a spectator, was large and various—though not among very delicate and refined natures—that a lady often takes a fancy to a suitor *after* she has rejected him; that, precisely *because* she has once rejected, she ultimately accepts, him. And even this chance was, in circumstances so desperate, not to be neglected. He assumed, therefore, the countenance, the postures, and the voice of heart-broken, but submissive despair; he affected a nobleness and magnanimity in his grief, which touched Evelyn to the quick, and took her by surprise.

“It is enough,” said he, in sad and fal-

tering accents ; “ quite enough to me to know that you cannot love me,—that I should fail in rendering you happy : say no more, Evelyn, say no more ! Let me spare you, at least, the pain your generous nature must feel in my anguish—I resign all pretensions to your hand : you are free !—may you be happy ! ”

“ Oh, Lord Vargrave ! oh, Lumley ! ” said Evelyn, weeping, and moved by a thousand recollections of early years. “ If I could but prove in any other way my grateful sense of your merits—your too partial appreciation of me—my regard for my lost benefactor—then, indeed, nor till then, could I be happy. Oh ! that this wealth, so little desired by me, had been more at my disposal ; but, as it is, the day that sees me in possession of it, shall see it placed under your disposition, your control. This is but justice—common justice to you ; you were the nearest relation of the departed. I had no claim on him—none, but affection. Affection ! and yet I disobey him ! ”

There was much in all this that secretly pleased Vargrave ; but it only seemed to redouble his grief.

“ Talk not thus, my ward, my friend—ah ! still my friend,” said he, putting his handkerchief to his eyes. “ I repine not ;—I am more than satisfied. Still let me preserve my privilege of guardian, of adviser—a privilege dearer to me than all the wealth of the Indies ! ”

Lord Vargrave had some faint suspicion that Legard had created an undue interest in Evelyn's heart ; and on this point he delicately and indirectly sought to sound her. Her replies convinced him that if Evelyn had conceived any prepossession for Legard, there had not been time or opportunity to ripen it into deep attachment.—Of Maltravers he had no fear. The habitual self-control of that reserved personage deceived him partly ; and his low opinion of mankind deceived him still more. For, if there had been any love between Maltravers and Evelyn, why should the former not

have stood his ground, and declared his suit ? Lumley would have "*bah'd*" and "*pish'd*" at the thought of any punctilious regard for engagements so easily broken, having power either to check passion for beauty, or to restrain self-interest in the chase of an heiress. He had known Maltravers ambitious; and with him, ambition and self-interest meant the same. Thus, by the very *finesse* of his character — while Vargrave, ever with the worldly, was a keen, and almost infallible observer — with natures of a more refined, or a higher order, he always missed the mark, by overshooting. Besides, had a suspicion of Maltravers ever crossed him, Caroline's communications would have dispelled it. It was more strange that Caroline should have been blind; nor would she have been so, had she been less absorbed in her own schemes and destinies. All her usual penetration had of late settled in self; and an uneasy feeling—half arising from conscien-

scious reluctance to aid Vargrave's objects—half from jealous irritation at the thought of Vargrave's marrying another—had prevented her from seeking any very intimate or confidential communication with Evelyn herself.

The dreaded conference was over; Evelyn parted from Vargrave with the very feelings he had calculated on exciting;—the moment he ceased to be her lover, her old childish regard for him recommenced. She pitied his dejection—she respected his generosity—she was deeply grateful for his forbearance. But still—still she was free; and her heart bounded within her at the thought.

Meanwhile, Vargrave, after his solemn farewell to Evelyn, retreated again to his own room, where he remained till his post-horses arrived. Then, descending into the drawing-room, he was pleased to find neither Aubrey nor Evelyn there. He knew that much affectation would be thrown away upon Mr. and Mrs. Merton—he thanked them for their hos-

pitality, with grave and brief cordiality—and then turned to Caroline, who stood apart by the window.

“All is up with me at present,” he whispered—“I leave you, Caroline, in anticipation of fortune, rank, and prosperity; that is some comfort. For myself, I see only difficulties, embarrassment, and poverty in the future; but I despond of nothing—hereafter you may serve me, as I have served you.—Adieu!— I have been advising Caroline not to spoil Doltimore, Mrs. Merton; he is conceited enough already—Good bye—God bless you all!—love to your little girls—let me know if I can serve you in any way, Merton—good bye again!” And thus, sentence by sentence, Vargrave talked himself into his carriage: as it drove by the drawing-room windows, he saw Caroline standing motionless where he had left her: he kissed his hand—her eyes were fixed mournfully on his. Hard, wayward, and worldly, as Caroline Merton was, Vargrave

was yet not worthy of the affection he had inspired ; for she could *feel*, and he could not ; —the distinction perhaps between the sexes. And there still stood Caroline Merton, recalling the last tones of that indifferent voice, till she felt her hand seized, and turned round to see Lord Doltimore, and smile upon the happy lover, persuaded that he was adored !

END OF BOOK V.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

Πῦρ σοὶ προσοίσω, κού τὸ σὸν προσκέψομαι.

EURIP. *Androm.* 256.

I will bring fire to thee—I reck not of the place.

CHAPTER I.

——— “This antient city,
How wanton sits she amidst Nature’s smiles !

——— Various nations meet,
As in the sea, yet not confined in space,
But streaming freely through the spacious streets.”

YOUNG.

——— “His teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain.”

SPENSER.

“PARIS is a delightful place—that is allowed by all. It is delightful to the young, to the gay, to the idle; to the literary lion, who likes to be petted; to the wiser epicure, who indulges a more justifiable appetite. It is delightful to ladies, who wish to live at their ease, and buy beautiful caps; delightful to philan-

thropists, who wish for listeners to schemes of colonising the moon ; delightful to the haunters of balls, and ballets, and little theatres, and superb cafés, where men with beards of all sizes and shapes scowl at the English, and involve their intellects in the fascinating game of dominoes. For these, and for many others, Paris is delightful. I say nothing against it. But, for my own part, I would rather live in a garret in London, than in a palace in the *Chaussée d'Antin*. *Chacun à son mauvais goût*.

“ I don't like the streets, in which I cannot walk but in the kennel : I don't like the shops, that contain nothing except what's at the window : I don't like the houses like prisons, which look upon a court-yard : I don't like the *beaux jardins*, which grow no plants save a Cupid in plaster : I don't like the wood fires, which demand as many *petits soins* as the women, and which warm no part of one but one's eyelids : I don't like the language, with

its strong phrases about nothing, and vibrating like a pendulum, between 'rapture' and 'desolation.' I don't like the accent, which one cannot get, without speaking through one's nose : I don't like the eternal fuss and jabber about books without nature, and revolutions without fruit : I have no sympathy with tales that turn on a dead jackass ; nor with constitutions that give the ballot to the representatives, and withhold the suffrage from the people : neither have I much faith in that enthusiasm for the *beaux arts*, which shows its produce in execrable music, detestable pictures, abominable sculpture, and a droll something that I believe the *French* call POETRY. Dancing and cookery—these are the arts the French excel in ; I grant it, and excellent things they are : but oh, England ! oh, Germany ! you need not be jealous of your rival !”

These are not the author's remarks—he disowns them ; they were Mr. Cleveland's. He was a prejudiced man ;—Maltravers was more

liberal, but then Maltravers did not pretend to be a wit.

Maltravers had been several weeks in the city of cities, and now he had his apartments in the gloomy but interesting Faubourg St. Germain, all to himself. For Cleveland,—having attended eight days at a sale, and having moreover ransacked all the curiosity-shops, and shipped off bronzes, and cabinets, and Genoese silks, and *objets de vertu*, enough to have half furnished Fonthill,—had fulfilled his mission, and returned to his villa. Before the old gentleman went, he flattered himself that change of air and scene had already been serviceable to his friend ; and that time would work a complete cure upon that commonest of all maladies, an unrequited passion, or an ill-placed caprice.

Maltravers, indeed, in the habit of conquering, as well as of concealing emotion, vigorously and earnestly strove to dethrone the image that had usurped his heart. Still vain

of his self-command, and still worshipping his favourite virtue of Fortitude, and his delusive philosophy of the calm Golden Mean, he would not weakly indulge the passion, while he had so sternly fled from its object. But yet the image of Evelyn pursued—it haunted him—it came on him unawares—in solitude—in crowds. That smile so cheering, yet so soft, that ever had power to chase away the shadow from his soul; that youthful and luxurious bloom of pure and eloquent thoughts, which was as the blossom of genius, before its fruit, bitter as well as sweet, is born—that rare union of quick feeling and serene temper, which forms the very ideal of what we dream of in the mistress, and exact from the wife—all, even more, far more, than the exquisite form and the delicate graces of the less durable beauty—returned to him, after every struggle with himself: and time only seemed to grave, in deeper if more latent folds of his heart, the ineradicable impression.

Maltravers renewed his acquaintance with some persons not unfamiliar to the reader.

Valerie de St. Ventadour.—How many recollections of the *beaux jours* of life were connected with that name! Precisely as she had never reached to his love, but only excited his fancy (the fancy of twenty-two!), had her image always retained a pleasant and grateful hue; it was blended with no deep sorrow—no stern regret—no dark remorse—no haunting shame. The recollection of Valerie was but treasured with those memories which are just touched by a sentiment—not blighted by a passion.

They met again. Madame de St. Ventadour was still beautiful, and still admired—perhaps more admired than ever: for to the great, fashion and celebrity bring a second and yet more popular youth. But Maltravers, if rejoiced to see how gently Time had dealt with the fair Frenchwoman, was yet more pleased to read in her fine features a more serene and

contented expression than it had formerly worn. Valerie de St. Ventadour had preceded her younger admirer through the "MYSTERIES OF LIFE;" she had learned the real objects of being;—she distinguished between the Actual and the Visionary—the Shadow and the Substance;—she had acquired content for the present, and looked with quiet hope towards the future. Her character was still spotless; or, rather, every year of temptation and trial had given it a fairer lustre. Love, that might have ruined, being once subdued, preserved her from all after danger. The first meeting between Maltravers and Valerie was, it is true, one of some embarrassment and reserve: not so the second. They did but once, and that slightly, recur to the past: and from that moment, as by a tacit understanding, true friendship between them dated. Neither felt mortified to see that an illusion had passed away—they were no longer the same in each other's eyes. Both might be

improved, and were so; but the Valerie and the Ernest of Naples were as things dead and gone! Perhaps Valerie's heart was even more reconciled to the cure of its soft and luxurious malady by the renewal of their acquaintance. The mature and experienced reasoner, in whom enthusiasm had undergone its usual change, with the calm brow and commanding aspect of sober manhood, was a being so different from the romantic boy, new to the actual world of civilised toils and pleasures—fresh from the adventures of Eastern wanderings—and full of golden dreams of poetry before it settles into authorship or action! She missed the brilliant errors—the daring aspirations—even the animated gestures and eager eloquence—that had interested and enamoured her in the loiterer by the shores of Baiæ, or amidst the tomb-like chambers of Pompeii. For the Maltravers now before her—wiser—better—nobler—even handsomer than of yore (for he was one whom manhood be-

came better than youth)—the Frenchwoman could at any period have felt friendship without danger. It seemed to her, not as it really was, the natural *développement*, but the very *contrast*, of the ardent, variable, imaginative boy—by whose side she had gazed at night on the moonlit waters and rosy skies of the soft Parthenope! How does time, after long absence, bring to us such contrasts between the one we remember and the one we see! And what a melancholy mockery does it seem of our own vain hearts, dreaming of impressions never to be changed, and affections that never can grow cool!

And now, as they conversed with all the ease of cordial and guileless friendship, how did Valerie rejoice in secret that upon that friendship there rested no blot of shame! and that she had not forfeited those consolations for a home without love, which had at last settled into cheerful nor unhallowed resigna-

tion—consolations only to be found in the conscience and the pride!

Monsieur de St. Ventadour had not altered, except that his nose was longer, and that he now wore a peruque in full curl, instead of his own straight hair. But, somehow or other—perhaps by the mere charm of custom—he had grown more pleasing in Valerie's eyes; habit had reconciled her to his foibles, deficiencies, and faults; and, by comparison with others, she could better appreciate his good qualities—such as they were—generosity, good-temper, good-nature, and unbounded indulgence to herself. Husband and wife have so many interests in common, that, when they have jogged on through the ups-and-downs of life a sufficient time, the leash which at first galled often grows easy and familiar; and, unless the *temper* of either be insufferable, what was once a grievous yoke, becomes but a companionable tie. And for the rest, Valerie—now

that sentiment and fancy were sobered down—could take pleasure in a thousand things which her pining affections once, as it were, overlooked and overshot. She could feel grateful for all the advantages her station and wealth procured her;—she could cull the roses in her reach, without sighing for the amaranths of Elysium.

If the great have more temptations than those of middle life, and if their senses of enjoyment become more easily pampered into a sickly apathy; so at least (if they can once outlive satiety) they have so many more resources at their command. There is a great deal of justice in the old line, displeasing though it be to those who think of love in a cottage, “ ’tis best repenting in a coach and six !” If among the Eupatrids, the Well Born, there is less love in wedlock, less quiet happiness at home, still they are less chained each to each—they have more independence, both the woman and the man—and occupations and solace without can be so easily

obtained!—Madame de St. Ventadour, in retiring from the mere frivolities of society—from crowded rooms, and the inane talk and hollow smiles of mere acquaintanceship—became more sensible of the pleasures that her refined and elegant intellect could derive from art and talent, and the communion of friendship. She drew around her the most cultivated minds of her time and country. Her abilities, her wit, and her conversational graces, enabled her not only to mix on equal terms with the most eminent, but to amalgamate and blend the varieties of talent into harmony. The same persons, when met elsewhere, seemed to have lost their charm: under Valerie's roof every one breathed a congenial atmosphere. And music and letters, and all that can refine and embellish civilised life, contributed their resources to this gifted and beautiful woman. And thus she found that the *mind* has excitement and occupation, as well as the heart; and, unlike

the latter, the culture we bestow upon the first ever yields us its return. We talk of education for the poor, but we forget how much it is needed by the rich ! Valeric was a living instance of the advantages to women of knowledge and intellectual resources. By them she had purified her fancy—by them she had conquered discontent—by them she had grown reconciled to life, and to her lot ! When the heavy heart weighed down the one scale, it was the mind that restored the balance.

The spells of Madame de St. Ventadour drew Maltravers into this charmed circle of all that was highest, purest, and most gifted in the society of Paris. There, he did not meet, as were met in the times of the old *regime*, sparkling abbés intent upon intrigues ; or amorous old dowagers, eloquent on Rousseau ; or powdered courtiers uttering epigrams against kings and religions—straws that foretold the whirlwind. Paul Courier was right ! Frenchmen are Frenchmen still, they are full

of fine phrases, and their thoughts smell of the theatre; they mistake foil for diamonds, the Grotesque for the Natural, the Exaggerated for the Sublime;—but still, I say, Paul Courier was right: there is more honesty now in a single *salon* in Paris, than there was in all France in the days of Voltaire! Vast interests, and solemn causes, are no longer tossed about like shuttlecocks on the battledores of empty tongues. In the *bouleversement* of Revolutions, the French have fallen on their feet!

Meeting men of all parties and all classes, Maltravers was struck with the heightened tone of public morals, the earnest sincerity of feeling which generally pervaded all, as compared with his first recollections of the Parisians. He saw that true elements for national wisdom were at work, though he saw also that there was no country in which their operations would be more liable to disorder, more slow and irregular in their results. The French are like the Israelites in the Wilderness, when, accord-

ing to a Hebrew tradition, every morning they seemed on the verge of Pisgah, and every evening they were as far from it as ever. But still time rolls on, the pilgrimage draws to its close, and the Canaan must come at last!

At Valerie's house, Maltravers once more met the De Montaignes. It was a painful meeting, for they thought of Cæsarini when they met.

It is now time to return to that unhappy man. Cæsarini, or rather Cesarini (for I think I have mentioned elsewhere, that it had been an early and characteristic affectation in the poet to adopt the Latin fashion of spelling a name derived from the Latin, even in contempt of the forms of his own language) had been removed from England, when Maltravers quitted it after Lady Florence's death; and Maltravers had thought it best to acquaint De Montaigne with all the circumstances that had led to his affliction.

The pride and the honour of the high-spirited Frenchman were deeply shocked by the tale of fraud and guilt, softened as it was; but the sight of the criminal, his awful punishment, merged every other feeling in compassion. Placed under the care of the most skillful practitioners in Paris, great hopes of Cæsarini's recovery had been at first entertained. Nor was it long, indeed, before he appeared entirely restored; so far as the external and superficial tokens of sanity could indicate a cure. He testified complete consciousness of the kindness of his relations, and clear remembrance of the past; but to the incoherent ravings of delirium, an intense melancholy, still more deplorable, succeeded. In this state, however, he became once more the inmate of his brother-in-law's house; and, though avoiding all society, except that of Teresa, whose affectionate nature never wearied of its cares, he resumed many of his old occupations. Again he appeared to take

delight in desultory and unprofitable studies, and in the cultivation of that luxury of solitary men, "the thankless muse." By shunning all topics connected with the gloomy cause of his affliction, and talking rather of the sweet recollections of Italy and childhood than of more recent events, his sister was enabled to soothe the dark hour, and preserve some kind of influence over the ill-fated man. One day, however, there fell into his hands an English newspaper, which was full of the praises of Lord Vargrave; and the article, in lauding the Peer, referred to his services as the commoner Lumley Ferrers.

This incident, slight as it appeared, and perfectly untraceable by his relations, produced a visible effect on Cæsarini; and three days afterwards he attempted his own life. The failure of the attempt was followed by the fiercest paroxysms. His disease returned in all its dread force; and it became necessary to place him under yet stricter confinement.

than he had endured before. Again, about a year from the date now entered upon, he had appeared to recover; and again he was removed to De Montaigne's house. His relatives were not aware of the influence which Lord Vargrave's name exercised over Cæsarini; in the melancholy tale communicated to them by Maltravers, that name had not been mentioned. If Maltravers had at one time entertained some vague suspicions that Lumley had acted a treacherous part with regard to Florence, those suspicions had long since died away, for want of confirmation; nor did he (nor did therefore the De Montaignes) connect Lord Vargrave with the affliction of Cæsarini. De Montaigne himself, therefore, one day at dinner, alluding to a question of foreign politics which had been debated that morning in the Chamber, and in which he himself had taken an active part, happened to refer to a speech of Vargrave's upon the subject, which had made

some sensation abroad, as well as at home.—Teresa asked innocently who Lord Vargrave was? and De Montaigne, well acquainted with the biography of the principal English statesmen, replied, that he had commenced his career as Mr. Ferrers; and reminded Teresa that they had once been introduced to him in Paris. Cæsarini suddenly rose and left the room; his absence was not noted—for his comings and goings were ever strange and fitful. Teresa soon afterwards quitted the apartment with her children, and De Montaigne, who was rather fatigued by the exertions and excitement of the morning, stretched himself in his chair to enjoy a short *siesta*. He was suddenly awakened by a feeling of pain and suffocation—awakened in time to struggle against a strong gripe that had fastened itself at his throat. The room was darkened in the growing shades of the evening; and, but for the glittering and savage eyes that were fixed on him, he could scarcely discern his

assailant. He at length succeeded, however, in freeing himself, and casting the intended assassin on the ground. He shouted for assistance; and the lights, borne by the servants who rushed into the room, revealed to him the face of his brother-in-law! Cæsarini, though in strong convulsions, still uttered cries and imprecations of revenge; he denounced De Montaigne as a traitor and a murderer! In the dark confusion of his mind, he had mistaken the guardian for the distant foe, whose name sufficed to conjure up the phantoms of the dead, and plunge reason into fury.

It was now clear that there was danger and death in Cæsarini's disease. His madness was pronounced to be capable of no certain and permanent cure: he was placed at a new asylum (the superintendents of which were celebrated for humanity as well as skill), a little distance from Versailles, and there he still remained. Recently his lucid intervals had become more frequent and prolonged;

but trifles that sprung from his own mind, and which no care could prevent or detect, sufficed to renew his calamity in all its fierceness. At such times he required the most unrelaxing vigilance; for his madness ever took an alarming and ferocious character; and had he been left unshackled, the boldest and stoutest of the keepers would have dreaded to enter his cell unarmed, or alone.

What made the disease of the mind appear more melancholy and confirmed was, that all this time the frame seemed to increase in health and strength. This is not an uncommon case in instances of mania—and it is generally the worst symptom. In earlier youth, Cæsarini had been delicate even to effeminacy; but now his proportions were enlarged—his form (though still lean and spare) muscular and vigorous—as if in the torpor which usually succeeded to his bursts of frenzy, the animal portion gained by the repose or disorganization of the intellectual. When in his better and calmer

moods—in which indeed none but the experienced could have detected his malady—books made his chief delight. But then he complained bitterly, if briefly, of the confinement he endured—of the injustice he suffered; and, as shunning all companions, he walked gloomily amidst the grounds that surrounded that House of Woe, his unseen guardians beheld him clenching his hands, as at some visionary enemy; or overheard him accuse some phantom of his brain of the torments he endured.

Though the reader can detect in Lumley Ferrers the cause of the frenzy, and the object of the imprecation, it was not so with the De Montaignes, nor with the patient's keepers and physicians; for in his delirium he seldom or never gave name to the shadows that he invoked—not even to that of Florence. It is, indeed, no unusual characteristic of madness to shun, as by a kind of cunning, all mention of the names of those by whom the madness has been caused. It is as if the Unfortunates

imagined that the madness might be undiscovered, if the images connected with it were unbetrayed.

Such, at this time, was the wretched state of the man, whose talents had promised a fair and honourable career, had it not been the wretched tendency of his mind, from boyhood upward, to pamper every unwholesome and unhallowed feeling, as a token of the exuberance of genius. De Montaigne, though he touched as lightly as possible upon this dark domestic calamity in his first communications with Maltravers, whose conduct in that melancholy tale of crime and woe, had, he conceived, been stamped with generosity and feeling,—still betrayed emotions that told how much his peace had been embittered.

“I seek to console Teresa,” said he, turning away his manly head—“and to point out all the blessings yet left to her; but that brother so beloved, from whom so much was so vainly expected!—still ever and ever, though

she strives to conceal it from me, this affliction comes back to her, and poisons every thought ! Oh ! better a thousand times that he had died ! When reason, sense, almost the soul, are dead—how dark and fiend-like is the life that remains behind !—And if it should be in the blood—if Teresa's children—dreadful thought !”

De Montaigne ceased—thoroughly overcome.

“Do not, my dear friend, so fearfully exaggerate your misfortune, great as it is ; Cæsarini's disease evidently arose from no physical conformation—it was but the crisis, the development, of a long contracted malady of mind—passions, morbidly indulged—the reasoning faculty, obstinately neglected—and yet too he may recover. The farther memory recedes from the shock he has sustained, the better the chance that his mind will regain its tone.”

De Montaigne wrung his friend's hand—

“It is strange that from you should come

sympathy and comfort !—you whom he so injured !—you whom his folly or his crime drove from your proud career, and your native soil ! but Providence will yet, I trust, redeem the evil of its erring creature, and I shall yet live to see you restored to hope and home, a happy husband, an honoured citizen—till then, I feel as if the curse lingered upon my race.”

“ Speak not thus—whatever my destiny, I have recovered from that wound ; and still, De Montaigne, I find in life that suffering succeeds to suffering, and disappointment to disappointment, as wave to wave. To endure is the only philosophy—to believe that we shall live again in a brighter planet, is the only hope that our reason should accept from our desires.”

CHAPTER II.

"Monstra evererunt mihi,
Introit in ædes ater alienus canis,
Anguis per impluvium decedit de tegulis,
Gallina cecinit!" TERENT.

WITH his constitutional strength of mind, and conformably with his acquired theories, Maltravers continued to struggle against the latest and strongest passion of his life. It might be seen in the paleness of his brow, and that nameless expression of suffering which betrays itself in the lines about the mouth—that his health was affected by the conflict within him—and many a sudden fit of absence and abstraction, many an impatient sigh fol-

lowed by a forced and unnatural gaiety, told the observant Valerie that he was the prey of a sorrow he was too proud to disclose. He compelled himself, however, to take, or to affect, an interest in the singular phenomena of the social state around him; phenomena that, in a happier or serener mood, would indeed have suggested no ordinary food for conjecture and meditation.

The state of *visible transition*, is the state of nearly all the enlightened communities in Europe. But nowhere is it so pronounced as in that country which may be called the Heart of European Civilization. There, all, to which the spirit of society attaches itself, appears broken, vague, and half developed—the Antique in ruins, and the New not formed. It is, perhaps, the only country in which the Constructive principle has not kept pace with the Destructive. The Has Been is blotted out—the To Be is as the shadow of a far land in a mighty and perturbed sea.

Maltravers, who for several years had not examined the progress of modern literature, looked with mingled feelings of surprise, distaste, and occasional and most reluctant admiration, on the various works which the successors of Voltaire and Rousseau have produced, and are pleased to call the offspring of Truth united to Romance.

Profoundly versed in the mechanism and elements of those masterpieces of Germany and England, from which the French have borrowed so largely, while pretending to be original,—Maltravers was shocked to see the monsters which these Frankensteins had created from the relics and offal of the holiest sepulchres. The head of a giant on the limbs of a dwarf—incongruous members jumbled together—parts fair and beautiful—the whole a hideous distortion !

“It may be possible,” said he to De Montaigne—“that these works are admired and extolled ; but how they can be vindicated by

the examples of Shakspeare and Goëthe, or even of Byron, who redeemed poor and melodramatic conceptions with a manly vigour of execution, an energy and completeness of purpose that Dryden himself never surpassed—is to me utterly inconceivable.”

“I allow that there is a strange mixture of fustian and maudlin in all these things,” answered De Montaigne—“but they are but the windfalls of trees that may bear rich fruit in due season—meanwhile, any new school is better than eternal imitations of the old. As for critical vindications of the works themselves—the age that produces the phenomena is never the age to classify and analyse them. We have had a deluge—and now new creatures spring from the new soil.”

“An excellent simile: they come forth from slime and mud—foetid and crawling—unformed and monstrous. I grant exceptions; and even in the New School, as it is called, I can admire the real genius—the vital and

creative power of Victor Hugo. But oh, that a nation which has known a Corneille, should ever spawn forth a Janin! And with these ricketty and drivelling abortions—all having followers and adulators—your Public can still bear to be told, that they have improved wonderfully on the day when they gave laws and models to the literature of Europe;—they can bear to hear ***** proclaimed a sublime genius in the same circles which sneer down Voltaire!”

Voltaire is out of fashion in France—but Rousseau still maintains his influence, and boasts his imitators. Rousseau was the worse man of the two; perhaps he was also the more dangerous writer. But his reputation is more durable, and sinks deeper into the heart of his nation; and the danger of his unstable and capricious doctrines has passed away. In Voltaire we behold the fate of all writers purely destructive; their uses cease with the evils they denounce. But Rousseau sought to construct as well as to destroy; and though nothing

could well be more absurd than his constructions, still man loves to look back and see even delusive images—castles in the air—reared above the waste where cities have been : Rather than leave even a burial ground to solitude, we populate it with ghosts.

By degrees, however, as he mastered all the features of the French literature, Maltravers became more tolerant of the present defects and more hopeful of the future results. He saw, in one respect, that that literature carried with it its own ultimate redemption. Its general characteristic—contradistinguished from the literature of the old French classic school—is to take the *heart* for its study; to bring the passions and feelings into action, and let the Within have its record and history as well as the Without. In all this, our contemplative analyst began to allow that the French were not far wrong when they contended that Shakespeare made the fountain of their inspiration—a fountain which the majority of our later Eng-

lish Fictionists, and Scott especially, have neglected. It is not by a story woven of interesting incidents, relieved by delineations of the externals and surface of character, humorous phraseology, and every-day ethics, that Fiction achieves its grandest ends.

In the French literature, thus characterised, there is much false morality, much depraved sentiment, and much hollow rant. But still it carries within it the germ of an excellence, which, sooner or later, must, in the progress of national genius, arrive at its full development.

Meanwhile, it is a consolation to know, that nothing really immoral is ever permanently popular, or ever, therefore, long deleterious; what is dangerous in a work of genius, cures itself in a few years. We can now read Werter, and instruct our hearts by its exposition of weakness and passion—our taste by its exquisite and unrivalled simplicity of construction and detail, without any fear that we shall shoot ourselves in top-boots! We can feel ourselves:

elevated by the noble sentiments of 'The Robbers,' and our penetration sharpened as to the wholesale immorality of conventional cant and hypocrisy, without any danger of turning banditti, and becoming cut-throats from the love of virtue. Providence, that has made the genius of the few in all times and countries the guide and prophet of the many ; and appointed Literature, as the sublime agent of Civilization, of Opinion, and of Law, has endowed the elements it employs with a divine power of self-purification. The stream settles of itself by rest and time ; the impure particles fly off, or are neutralized by the healthful. It is only fools that call the works of a master-spirit immoral. There does not exist in the literature of the world, one *popular* book that is immoral two centuries after it is produced. For, in the heart of nations, the False does not live so long ; and the True is the Ethical to the end of time.

From the literary, Maltravers turned to the political state of France his curious and

thoughtful eye. He was struck by the resemblance which this nation—so civilized, so thoroughly European—bears in one respect to the despotisms of the East: the convulsions of the capital decide the fate of the country; Paris is the tyrant of France. He saw in this inflammable concentration of power, which must ever be pregnant with great evils, one of the causes why the revolutions of that powerful and polished people are so incomplete and unsatisfactory—why, like Cardinal Fleury—system after system, and Government after Government,

“—floruit sine fructu,
Defloruit sine luctu.”

Maltravers regarded it as a singular instance of perverse ratiocination; that, unwarned by experience, the French should still persist in perpetuating this political vice; that all their policy should still be the policy of Centralization—a principle which secures the momentary strength, but ever ends in the

abrupt destruction, of States. It is, in fact, the perilous tonic, which seems to brace the system, but drives the blood to the head—thus comes apoplexy and madness. By centralization the provinces are weakened, it is true; but weak to assist as well as to oppose a Government—weak to withstand a mob. Nowhere, now-a-days, is a mob so powerful as in Paris: the political history of Paris is the history of mobs. Centralization is an excellent quackery for a despot who desires power to last only his own life, and who has but a life-interest in the State; but to true liberty and permanent order, centralization is a deadly poison. The more the Provinces govern their own affairs, the more we find everything, even to roads and post-horses, are left to the people;—the more the Municipal Spirit pervades every vein of the vast body, the more certain may we be that reform and change must come from universal opinion, which is slow, and constructs ere it destroys—not from public clamour, which is

sudden, and not only pulls down the edifice but sells the bricks !

Another peculiarity in the French Constitution struck and perplexed Maltravers. This people, so pervaded by the republican sentiment—this people who had sacrificed so much for Freedom—this people who, in the name of Freedom, had perpetrated so much crime with Robespierre, and achieved so much glory with Napoleon—this people were, *as a people*, contented to be utterly excluded from all power and voice in the State ! Out of thirty-three millions of subjects, less than two hundred thousand electors ! Where was there ever an oligarchy equal to this ? What a strange infatuation, to demolish an aristocracy and yet to exclude a people ! What an anomaly in political architecture, to build an inverted pyramid ! Where was the safety-valve of governments—where the natural vents of excitement in a population so inflammable ? The People itself were left a mob : no stake in the State—

no action in its affairs—no legislative interest in its security.

On the other hand, it was singular to see how—the aristocracy of birth broken down—the aristocracy of letters had arisen. A Peerage, half composed of journalists, philosophers, and authors ! This was the *beau ideal* of Algernon Sidney's Aristocratic Republic ; of the Helvetian visions of what ought to be the dispensation of public distinctions ; yet was it, after all, a desirable aristocracy ? Did society gain ?—did literature lose ? Was the Priesthood of Genius made more sacred and more pure by these worldly decorations and hollow titles—or was aristocracy itself thus rendered a loftier, a more disinterested, a more powerful, or more sagacious element in the administration of law, or the exaltation of opinion ? These questions, not lightly to be answered, could not fail to arouse the speculation and curiosity of a man who had been familiar with the closet and the forum ; and, in proportion as he found his inte-

rest excited in these problems to be solved by a foreign nation, did the thoughtful Englishman feel the old instinct—which binds the citizen to the father-land—begin to stir once more earnestly and vividly within him.

“ You, yourself individually, are passing, like us,”—(said De Montaigne one day to Maltravers)—“ through a state of transition. You have for ever left the Ideal, and you are carrying your cargo of experience over to the Practical. When you reach that haven, you will have completed the development of your forces.”

“ You mistake me ; I am but a spectator.”

“ Yes ; but you desire to go behind the scenes. And he who once grows familiar with the green-room, longs to be an actor.”

With Madame de St. Ventadour and the De Montaignes, Maltravers passed the chief part of his time. They knew how to appreciate his nobler, and to love his gentler, attributes and qualities ;—they united in a warm

interest for his future fate;—they combated his Philosophy of Inaction;—and they felt that it was because he was not happy that he was wise. Experience was to him what ignorance had been to Alice. His faculties were chilled and dormant. As affection to those who are unskilled in all things—so is affection to those who despair of all things. The mind of Maltravers was a world without a sun !

CHAPTER III.

“Cœlebs quid agam?”

HORAT.

IN a room at Fenton's Hotel sate Lord Vargrave and Caroline Lady Doltimore — two months after the marriage of the latter.

“Doltimore has positively fixed, then, to go abroad, on your return from Cornwall?”

“Positively—to Paris:—you can join us at Christmas, I trust?”

“I have no doubt of it; and before then, I hope that I shall have arranged certain public matters, which at present harass and absorb me even more than my private affairs.”

“ You have managed to obtain terms with Mr. Douce, and to delay the repayment of your debt to him ? ”

“ Yes, I hope so, till I touch Miss Cameron’s income ; which will be mine, I trust, by the time she is eighteen.”

“ You mean the forfeit-money of 30,000*l.* ? ”

“ Not I !—I mean what I said ! ”

“ Can you really imagine she will still accept your hand ? ”

“ With your aid, I do imagine it !—Hear me. You must take Evelyn with you to Paris. I have no doubt but that she will be delighted to accompany you—nay, I have paved the way so far. For, of course, as a friend of the family, and guardian to Evelyn, I have maintained a correspondence with Lady Vargrave. She informs me that Evelyn has been unwell and low-spirited ; that she fears Brook Green is dull for her, &c. I wrote in reply, to say, that the more my ward saw of the world, prior to her accession, when of age, to the position

she would occupy in it, the more she would fulfil my late uncle's wishes with respect to her education, and so forth. I added, that as you were going to Paris—and as you loved her so much—there could not be a better opportunity for her entrance into life, under the most favourable auspices. Lady Vargrave's answer to this letter arrived this morning:—she will consent to such an arrangement should you propose it.”

“ But what good will result to yourself in this project?—at Paris you will be sure of rivals, and——”

“ Caroline !” interrupted Lord Vargrave; “ I know very well what you would say ; I also know all the danger I must incur. But it is a choice of evils ;—and I choose the least. You see that while she is at Brook Green, and under the eye of that sly old curate, I can effect nothing with her. There, she is entirely removed from my influence ;—not so abroad—not so under your roof. Listen to me still

further. In this country—and especially in the seclusion and shelter of Brook Green—I have no scope for any of those means, which I shall be compelled to resort to, in failure of all else.”

“What can you intend?” said Caroline, with a slight shudder.

“I don’t know what I intend yet. But this, at least, I can tell you—that Miss Cameron’s fortune I must and will have. I am a desperate man, and I can play a desperate game, if need be.”

“And do you think that *I* will aid—will abet?”

“Hush!—not so loud!—Yes, Caroline, you will, and you must, aid and abet me in any project I may form.

“Must! Lord Vargrave.”

“Ay!” said Lumley with a smile, and sinking his voice into a whisper; “ay!—*you are in my power!*”

“ ‘Traitor!—you cannot dare—you cannot mean——!’ ”

“ I mean nothing more than to remind you of the ties that exist between us—ties which ought to render us the firmest, and the most confidential of friends. Come, Caroline, recollect all the benefits must not lie on one side: I have obtained for you rank and wealth; I have procured you a husband—you must help me to a wife ! ”

Caroline sunk back, and covered her face with her hands.

“ I allow,” continued Vargrave, coldly; “ I allow that your beauty and talent were sufficient of themselves to charm a wiser man than Doltimore; but had I not suppressed jealousy—sacrificed love—had I dropped a hint to your liege lord—nay, had I not fed his lap-dog vanity by all the cream and sugar of flattering falsehoods—you would be Caroline Merton still ! ”

“ Oh ! would that I were !—oh ! that I were anything but your tool—you : victim ! Fool that I was !—wretch that I am !—I am rightly punished ! ”

“ Forgive me—forgive me, dearest,” said Vargrave, soothingly—“ I was to blame, forgive me : but you irritated, you maddened me, by your seeming indifference to my prosperity, my fate. I tell you again and again, pride of my soul, I tell you—that you are the only being I love ; and if you will allow me, if you will rise superior, as I once fondly hoped, to all the cant and prejudice of convention and education—the only woman I could ever respect, as well as love ! Oh, hereafter, when you see me at that height to which I feel that I am born to climb, let me think that to your generosity, your affection, your zeal, I owed the ascent—at present I am on the precipice—without your hand I fall for ever. My own fortune is gone—the miserable forfeit due to me, if Evelyn continues to reject my suit,

when she has arrived at the age of eighteen, is deeply mortgaged. I am engaged in vast and daring schemes, in which I may either rise to the highest station, or lose that which I now hold. In either case, how necessary to me is wealth—in the one instance, to maintain my advancement; in the other, to redeem my fall.”

“But did you not tell me,” said Caroline, “that Evelyn proposed and promised to place her fortune at your disposal, even while rejecting your hand?”

“Absurd mockery!” exclaimed Vargrave—“the foolish boast of a girl—an impulse liable to every caprice:—can you suppose, that when she launches into the extravagance natural to her age, and necessary to her position, she will not find a thousand demands upon her rent-roll not dreamt of now? a thousand vanities and baubles, that will soon erase my poor and hollow claim from her recollection? Can you suppose, that if she marry another,

her husband would ever consent to a child's romance? And even were all this possible—were it possible that girls were not extravagant, and that husbands had no common sense, is it for me, Lord Vargrave, to be a mendicant upon reluctant bounty? a poor cousin—a pensioned led-captain? Heaven knows I have as little false pride as any man, but still this is a degradation I cannot stoop to. Besides, Caroline, I am no miser, no Harpagon—I do not want wealth for wealth's sake, but for the advantages it bestows—respect—honour—position; and these I get as the husband of the great heiress: should I get them as her dependant? No:—for more than six years I have built my schemes and shaped my conduct, according to one assured and definite object; and that object I shall not now in the eleventh hour let slip from my hands. Enough of this—you will pass Brook Green in returning from Cornwall—you will take Evelyn

with you to Paris—leave the rest to me. Fear no folly, no violence, from my plans, whatever they may be:—I work in the dark. Nor do I despair that Evelyn will love, that Evelyn will voluntarily accept, me yet: my disposition is sanguine; I look to the bright side of things;—do the same!”

Here their conference was interrupted by Lord Doltimore, who lounged carelessly into the room, with his hat on one side—“Ah! Vargrave, how are you? You will forget the letters of introduction?—Where are you going, Caroline?”

“Only to my own room, to put on my bonnet; the carriage will be here in a few minutes”—and Caroline escaped.

“So you go to Cornwall to-morrow, Doltimore?”

“Yes—cursed bore—but Lady Elizabeth insists on seeing us, and I don’t object to a week’s good shooting. The old lady, too, has

something to leave, and Caroline had no dowry : not that I care for it ; but still marriage is expensive."

"By the bye, you will want the five thousand pounds you lent me?"

"Why, whenever it is convenient."

"Say no more—it shall be seen to. Doltimore, I am very anxious that Lady Doltimore's *debût* at Paris should be brilliant : every thing depends on falling into the right set. For myself, I don't care about fashion, and never did ; but if I were married, and an idle man like you, it might be different."

"Oh, you will be very useful to us when we return to London. Meanwhile, you know, you have my proxy in the Lords—I dare say there will be some sharp work the first week or two after the recess."

"Very likely—and depend on one thing, my dear Doltimore, that when I am in the Cabinet, a certain friend of mine shall be an earl—Adieu."

“Good bye, my dear Vargrave, good bye—and, I say,—I say, don’t distress yourself about that trifle—a few months hence, it will suit me just as well.”

“Thanks—I will just look into my accounts, and use you without ceremony. Well—I dare say we shall meet at Paris. Oh, I forgot!—I observe that you have renewed your intimacy with Legard. Now he is a very good fellow, and I gave him that place to oblige you—still, as you are no longer a *garçon*—but perhaps I shall offend you?”

“Not at all. What is there against Legard?”

“Nothing in the world—but he is a bit of a boaster. I dare say his ancestor was a Gascon—poor fellow!—and he affects to say that you can’t choose a coat, or buy a horse, without his approval and advice—that he can turn you round his finger. Now this hurts your consequence in the world—you don’t get credit for your own excellent sense and taste.

Take my advice, avoid these young hangers-on of fashion—these club-room lions. Having no importance of their own, they steal the importance of their friends—*Verbum sap.*”

“You are very right—Legard *is* a coxcomb ; and now I see why he talked of joining us at Paris.”

“Don’t let him do any such thing !—he will be telling the Frenchmen that her Ladyship is in love with him—ha ! ha !

“Ha ! ha !—a very good joke—poor Caroline !—very good joke ! Well, good bye once more ;” and Vargrave closed the door.

“Legard go to Paris—not if Evelyn goes there !” muttered Lumley. “Besides, I want no partner in the little that one can screw out of this blockhead.”

CHAPTER IV.

"Mr. Bumblecase, a word with you—I have a little business."

"Farewell, the goodly Manor of Blackacre, with all its woods, underwoods, and appurtenances whatever."

WYCHERLEY'S Plain Dealer.

IN quitting Fenton's Hotel, Lord Vargrave entered into one of the Clubs in St. James's-street—this was rather unusual with him, for he was not a club man. It was not his system to spend his time for nothing; but it was a wet December day—the House not yet assembled, and he had done his official business. Here, as he was munching a biscuit and reading an article in one of the Ministerial papers—the heads of which he himself had supplied

—Lord Saxingham joined, and drew him to the window.

“I have reason to think,” said the Earl, “that your visit to Windsor did good.”

“Ah, indeed, so I fancied.”

“I do not think that a certain personage will ever consent to the—question; and the Premier, whom I saw to-day, seems chafed and irritated.”

“Nothing can be better—I know that we are in the right boat.”

“I hope it is not true, Lumley, that your marriage with Miss Cameron is broken off—such was the *on dit* in the Club, just before you entered.”

“Contradict it, my dear Lord, contradict it. I hope by the Spring to introduce Lady Vargrave to you. But who broached the absurd report?”

“Why, your *protégé*, Legard, says he heard so from his uncle, who heard it from Sir John Merton.”

“Legard is a puppy, and Sir John Merton a *gobemouche*. Legard had better attend to his office, if he wants to get on; and I wish you’d tell him so. I have heard somewhere, that he talks of going to Paris—you can just hint to him that he must give up these idle habits. Public functionaries are not now what they were—people are expected to work for the money they pocket—otherwise Legard is a cleverish fellow, and deserves promotion. A word or two of caution, from you, will do him a vast deal of good.”

“Be sure I will lecture him. Will you dine with me to-day, Lumley?”

“No. I expect my co-trustee, Mr. Douce, on matters of business—a *tête-à-tête* dinner.”

Lord Vargrave had, as he conceived, very cleverly talked over Mr. Douce into letting his debt to that gentleman run on for the present; and, in the mean while, he had overwhelmed Mr. Douce with his condescensions. That gentleman had twice dined with Lord Var-

grave; and Lord Vargrave had twice dined with him. The occasion of the present more familiar entertainment was in a letter from Mr. Douce, begging to see Lord Vargrave on particular business; and Vargrave, who by no means liked the word *business* from a gentleman to whom he owed money, thought that it would go off more smoothly, if a little *arrosé* by champagne.

Accordingly, he begged "My dear Mr Douce" to excuse ceremony, and dine with him on Thursday, at seven o'clock—he was really so busy all the mornings.

At seven o'clock, Mr. Douce came.—The moment he entered, Vargrave called out, at the top of his voice, "Dinner immediately!"—And as the little man bowed, and shuffled, and fidgeted, and wriggled—(while Vargrave shook him by the hand)—as if he thought he was going himself to be spitted,—his host said, "With your leave, we'll postpone the budget till after dinner. It is the fashion now-a-days to postpone budgets as

long as we can—Eh?—Well, and how are all at home?—Devilish cold—is it not?—So you go to your villa every day?—That's what keeps you in such capital health. You know I had a villa too—though I never had time to go there.”

“ Ah, yes—I think, I remember, at Ful—Ful—Fulham!” gasped out Mr. Douce.—“ Your poor uncle's—now Lady Var—Var—Vargrave's jointure house. So—so—.”

“ She don't live there!” burst in Vargrave (far too impatient to be polite)—“ Too cock-nified for her—gave it up to me—very pretty place—but damned expensive. I could not afford it—never went there—and so, I have let it to my wine-merchant; the rent just pays his bill. You will taste some of the sofas and tables to-day in his champagne! I don't know how it is, I always fancy my sherry smells like my poor uncle's old leather chair—very odd smell it had—a kind of respectable smell!—I hope you're hungry—dinner's ready.”

Vargrave thus rattled away in order to give

the good banker to understand that his affairs were in the most flourishing condition; and he continued to keep up the ball all dinner time—stopping Mr. Douce's little, miserable, gasping, dace-like mouth with "a glass of wine, Douce!" or "by the bye, Douce," whenever he saw that worthy gentleman about to make the *Æschylean* improvement of a second person in the dialogue.

At length dinner being fairly over, and the servants withdrawn, Lord Vargrave, knowing that sooner or later Douce would have his say, drew his chair to the fire, put his feet on the fender, and cried, as he tossed off his claret, "NOW, DOUCE—WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"

Mr. Douce opened his eyes to their full extent, and then as rapidly closed them; and this operation he continued till, having snuffed them so much that they could by no possibility burn any brighter, he was convinced that he had not misunderstood his Lordship.

"Indeed, then," he began in his most fright-

ened manner, "indeed—I—really your Lordship misunderstands—I—I wanted to speak to you on business."

"Well, what can I do for you—some little favour, eh? Snug sinecure for a favourite clerk—or a place in the stamp-office for your fat footman—John, I think, you call him! You know, my dear Douce, you may command me."

"Oh indeed—you are all good—good—goodness—but—but—"

Vargrave threw himself back, and shutting his eyes and pursing up his mouth, resolutely suffered Mr. Douce to unbosom himself without interruption. He was considerably relieved to find that the business referred to related only to Miss Cameron. Mr. Douce having reminded Lord Vargrave, as he had often done before, of the wishes of his uncle that the greater portion of the money bequeathed to Evelyn should be invested in land, proceeded to say that a most excellent opportunity presented itself, for just such a

purchase as would have rejoiced the heart of the late Lord. A superb place, in the style of Blickling—deer-park six miles round—10,000 acres of land—bringing in a clear 8,000*l.* a year—purchase-money only 240,000*l.* The whole estate was, indeed, much larger—18,000 acres; but then the more distant farms could be sold in different lots,—in order to meet the exact sum Miss Cameron's trustees were enabled to invest.

“ Well,” said Vargrave, “ and where is it? My poor uncle was after De Clifford's estate, but the title was not good.”

“ Oh! this—is much—much—much fi—fi—finer;—famous investment—but rather far off—in—in the north. Li—Li—Lisle Court.”

“ Lisle Court! Why, does not that belong to Colonel Maltravers?”

“ Yes.—It is, indeed, quite, I may say—a secret—yes—really—a se—se—secret—not in the market yet,—not at all,—soon snapped up.”

“ Humph! Has Colonel Maltravers been extravagant?”

“No—but he does not—I hear—or rather Lady—Julia—so I’m told, yes, indeed—does not li—like—going so far, and so they spend the winter in Italy instead. Yes—very odd—very fine place.”

Lumley was slightly acquainted with the elder brother of his old friend—a man who possessed some of Ernest’s faults—very proud and very exacting, and very fastidious—but all these faults were developed in the ordinary common-place world, and were not the refined abstractions of his younger brother.

Colonel Maltravers had continued, since he entered the Guards, to be thoroughly the man of fashion, and nothing more. But rich and well-born, and highly connected, and thoroughly *à la mode* as he was—his pride made him uncomfortable in London—while his fastidiousness made him uncomfortable in the country. He was *rather* a great person, but he wanted to be a *very* great person. This he was at Lisle Court; but that did not satisfy him—he wanted not only to be a very great person,

but a very great person among very great persons—and squires and parsons bored him. Lady Julia, his wife, was a fine lady—inane and pretty—who saw everything through her husband's eyes. He was quite master *chez lui*—was Colonel Maltravers! He lived a great deal abroad—for on the continent his large income seemed princely, while his high character, thorough breeding, and personal advantages, which were remarkable, secured him a greater position in foreign courts than at his own. Two things had greatly disgusted him with Lisle Court—trifles they might be with others, but they were not trifles to Cuthbert Maltravers;—in the first place, a man who had been his father's attorney, and who was the very incarnation of coarse unrepellable familiarity, had bought an estate close by the said Lisle Court, and had, *horresco referens*, been made a baronet! Sir Gregory Gubbins took precedence of Colonel Maltravers! He could not ride out but he met Sir Gregory—

he could not dine out but he had the pleasure of walking behind Sir Gregory's bright blue coat with its bright brass buttons. In his last visit to Lisle Court, which he had then crowded with all manner of fine people—he had seen—the very first morning after his arrival—seen from the large window of his state saloon—a great staring white, red, blue, and gilt thing—at the end of the stately avenue planted by Sir Guy Maltravers in honour of the Victory over the Spanish Armada. He looked in mute surprise, and everybody else looked—and a polite German Count, gazing through his eye-glass, said—“ Ah! dat is vat you call a vim in your *pays*—the vim of Colonel Maltravers ! ”

This “ vim ” was the pagoda summer-house of Sir Gregory Gubbins—erected in imitation of the Pavilion at Brighton. Colonel Maltravers was miserable—the *vim* haunted him—it seemed ubiquitous—he could not escape it—it was built on the highest spot in the

county;—ride, walk, sit where he would—the *vim* stared at him—and he thought he saw little Mandarins shake their round little heads at him. This was one of the great curses of Lisle Court—the other was yet more galling. The owners of Lisle Court had for several generations possessed the dominant interest in the county town. The Colonel himself meddled little in politics, and was too fine a gentleman for the drudgery of Parliament:—he had offered the seat to Ernest, when the latter had commenced his public career—but the result of a communication proved that their political views were dissimilar; and the negociation dropped without ill feeling on either side. Subsequently a vacancy occurred; and Lady Julia's brother (just made a Lord of the Treasury) wished to come into Parliament, so the county town was offered to him. Now, the proud Commoner had married into the family of a Peer as proud as himself, and Colonel Maltravers was always glad whenever

he could impress his consequence on his connexions by doing them a favour. He wrote to his Steward, to see that the thing was properly settled—and came down on the nomination day “to share the triumph and partake the gale.” Guess his indignation, when he found the nephew of Sir Gregory Gubbins was already in the field! The result of the election was, that Mr. Augustus Gubbins came in, and that Colonel Maltravers was pelted with cabbage-stalks, and accused of attempting to *sell* the worthy and independent electors to a government nominee! In shame and disgust, Colonel Maltravers broke up his establishment at Lisle Court, and once more retired to the continent.

About a week from the date now touched upon, Lady Julia and himself had arrived in London from Vienna; and a new mortification awaited the unfortunate owner of Lisle Court. A railroad company had been established, of which Sir Gregory Gubbins was a

principal shareholder ; and the speculator, Mr. Augustus Gubbins, one of the "most useful men in the House," had undertaken to carry the Bill through Parliament. Colonel Maltravers received a letter of portentous size, enclosing the map of the places which this blessed railway was to bisect ; and lo ! just at the bottom of his park, ran a portentous line which informed him of the sacrifice he was expected to make for the public good—especially for the good of that very county town, the inhabitants of which had pelted him with cabbage-stalks !

Colonel Maltravers lost all patience. Unacquainted with our wise legislative proceedings, he was not aware that a railway planned is a very different thing from a railway made ; and that Parliamentary Committees are not by any means favourable to schemes for carrying the public through a gentleman's park.

"This country is not to be lived in," said he to Lady Julia ; "it gets worse and worse every

year. I am sure I have never had any comfort in Lisle Court. I've a great mind to sell it."

"Why, indeed, as we have no sons, only daughters, and Ernest is so well provided for," said Lady Julia; "and the place is so far from London; and the neighbourhood is so disagreeable—I think that we could do very well without it."

Colonel Maltravers made no answer; but he revolved the pros and cons: and then he began to think how much it cost him in game-keepers, and carpenters, and bailiffs, and gardeners, and heaven knows who besides; and then the pagoda flashed across him; and then the cabbage-stalks; and at last he went to his solicitor.

"You may sell Lisle Court," said he, quietly.

The solicitor dipped his pen in the ink. "The particulars, Colonel?"

"Particulars of Lisle Court! everybody, that is, every gentleman, knows Lisle Court!"

“ Price, Sir ? ”

“ You know the rents—calculate accordingly. It will be too large a purchase for one individual; sell the outlying woods and farms separately from the rest.”

“ We must draw up an advertisement, Colonel.”

“ Advertise Lisle Court!—out of the question, Sir. I can have no publicity given to my intention; mention it quietly to any capitalist; but keep it out of the papers till it is all settled. In a week or two, you will find a purchaser—the sooner the better.”

Besides his horror of newspaper comments and newspaper puffs, Colonel Maltravers dreaded that his brother—then in Paris—should learn his intention, and attempt to thwart it; and, somehow or other, the Colonel was a little in awe of Ernest, and a little ashamed of his resolution. He did not know that, by a singular coincidence, Ernest himself had thought of selling Burleigh.

The solicitor was by no means pleased with this way of settling the matter. However, he whispered it about, that Lisle Court was in the market; and as it really was one of the most celebrated places of its kind in England, the whisper spread among bankers, and brewers, and soap-boilers, and other rich people—the Medici of the New Noblesse rising up amongst us—till at last it reached the ears of Mr. Douce.

Lord Vargrave, however bad a man he might be, had not many of those vices of character which belong to what I may call the *personal class of vices*—that is, he had no ill will to individuals. He was not, ordinarily, a jealous man, nor a spiteful, nor a malignant, nor a vindictive man: his vices arose from utter indifference to all men, and all things—except as conducive to his own ends. He would not have injured a worm if it did him no good, but he would have set any house on fire, if he had no other means of roasting his own eggs.

Yet still, if any feeling of personal rancour could harbour in his breast, it was first towards Evelyn Cameron; and, secondly, towards Ernest Maltravers. For the first time in his life, he did long for revenge—revenge against the one for stealing his patrimony, and refusing his hand—and that revenge he hoped to gratify. As to the other, it was not so much dislike he felt, as an uneasy sentiment of inferiority. However well he himself had got on in the world, he yet grudged the reputation of a man whom he had remembered a wayward, inexperienced boy: he did not love to hear any one praise Maltravers. He fancied, too, that this feeling was reciprocal, and that Maltravers was pained at hearing of any new step in his own career. In fact, it was that sort of jealousy, which men often feel for the companions of their youth, whose characters are higher than their own, and whose talents are of an order they do not quite comprehend. Now it certainly did seem, at that moment, to Lord Vargrave, that

it would be a most splendid triumph over Mr. Maltravers of Burleigh, to be Lord of Lisle Court, the hereditary seat of the elder branch of the family: to be as it were in the very shoes of Mr. Ernest Maltravers' elder brother. He knew, too, that it was a property of great consequence: Lord Vargrave of Lisle Court would hold a very different position in the peerage, from Lord Vargrave of —, Fulham! Nobody would call the owner of Lisle Court an adventurer; nobody would suspect such a man of caring three straws about place and salary. And if he married Evelyn, and if Evelyn bought Lisle Court, would not Lisle Court be his? He vaulted over the *ifs*, stiff monosyllables though they were, with a single jump. Besides, even should the thing come to nothing, there was the very excuse he sought for joining Evelyn at Paris, for conversing with her, consulting her. It was true that the will of the late Lord left it solely at the discretion of the trustees to select such

landed investment as seemed best to them. But still it was, if not legally necessary, at least but a proper courtesy, to consult Evelyn. And plans, and drawings, and explanations, and rent-rolls, would justify him in spending morning after morning alone with her.

Thus cogitating, Lord Vargrave suffered Mr. Douce to stammer out sentence upon sentence, till at length, as he rang for coffee, his Lordship stretched himself with the air of a man stretching himself into self-complacency or a good thing, and said—

“ Mr. Douce, I will go down to Lisle Court as soon as I can—I will see it—I will ascertain all about it—I will consider favourably of it—I agree with you, I think it will do famously.”

“ But,” said Mr. Douce, who seemed singularly anxious about the matter—“ we must make haste, my Lord, for really—yes, indeed—if—if—if Baron Roths—Roths-child should—that is to say——”

“Oh, yes, I understand—keep the thing close, my dear Douce ; make friends with the Colonel’s lawyer ; play with him a little, till I can run down.”

“Besides, you see, you are such a good man of business, my Lord—that you see, that—yes, really — there must be time to draw out the purchase-money—sell out at a prop—prop——”

“To be sure, to be sure—bless me, how late it is ! I am afraid my carriage is ready ! I must go to Madame de L——’s.”

Mr. Douce, who seemed to have much more to say, was forced to keep it in for another time, and to take his leave.

Lord Vargrave went to Madame de L——’s. His position in what is called Exclusive Society, was rather peculiar. By those who affected to be the best judges, the frankness of his manner, and the easy oddity of his conversation, were pronounced at variance with the tranquil serenity of thorough breeding. But still he

was a great favourite both with fine ladies and dandies. His handsome, keen countenance, his talents, his politics, his intrigues, and an animated boldness in his bearing, compensated for his constant violation of all the minutiae of orthodox conventionalism.

At this house he met Colonel Maltravers, and took an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with that gentleman. He then referred, in a confidential whisper, to the communication he had received touching Lisle Court.

“Yes,” said the Colonel, “I suppose I must sell the place, if I can do so quietly. To be sure, when I first spoke to my lawyer it was in a moment of vexation, on hearing that the — railroad was to go through the park, but I find that I overrated that danger. Still, if you will do me the honour to go and look over the place, you will find very good shooting; and when you come back, you can see if it will suit you. Don’t say anything about it, when

you are there ; it is better not to publish my intention all over the county. I shall have Sir Gregory Gubbins offering to buy it, if you do ! ”

“ You may depend on my discretion. Have you heard anything of your brother lately ? ”

“ Yes ; I fancy he is going to Switzerland. He would soon be in England, if he heard I was going to part with Lisle Court ! ”

“ What, it would vex him so ? ”

“ I fear it would ; but he has a nice old place of his own, not half so large, and therefore not half so troublesome, as Lisle Court. ”

“ Ay ! and he *did* talk of selling that nice old place. ”

“ Selling Burleigh ! you surprise me. But really country places in England *are* a bore. I suppose he has his Gubbins as well as myself ! ”

Here the chief minister of the government, adorned by Lord Vargrave's virtues, passed by ; and Lumley turned to greet him.

The two ministers talked together most affectionately in a close whisper:—so affectionately, that one might have seen, with half an eye, that they hated each other like poison!

CHAPTER V.

“Inspicere tanquam in speculum, in vitas omnium
Jubeo.”

TERENT.

ERNEST Maltravers still lingered at Paris: he gave up all notion of proceeding farther. He was, in fact, tired of travel. But there was another reason that chained him to that *Omphalos Gaiaë*—“the Navel of the Earth”—there is not anywhere a better sounding-board to London rumours than the English *quartier* between the Boulevards des Italiennes and the Tuileries: here, at all events, he should soonest learn the worst: and every

day, as he took up the English newspapers, a sick feeling of apprehension and fear came over him. No! till the seal was set upon the bond—till the Rubicon was passed—till Miss Cameron was the wife of Lord Vargrave, he could neither return to the home that was so eloquent with the recollections of Evelyn, nor, by removing farther from England, delay the receipt of an intelligence which he vainly told himself he was prepared to meet.

He continued to seek such distractions from thought as were within his reach; and, as his heart was too occupied for pleasures which had, indeed, long since palled,—those distractions were of the grave and noble character which it is a prerogative of the intellect to afford to the passions.

De Montaigne was neither a Doctrinaire nor a Republican—and yet, perhaps, he was a little of both. He was one who thought that the tendency of all European States is to

wards Democracy ; but he by no means looked upon democracy as a panacea for all legislative evils. He thought that, while a writer should be in advance of his time, a statesman should content himself with marching by its side ; that a nation could not be ripened, like an exotic, by artificial means ; that it must be developed only by natural influences. He believed that forms of government are never universal in their effects. Thus, De Montaigne conceived that we were wrong in attaching more importance to legislative than to social reforms. He considered, for instance, that the surest sign of our progressive civilization is in our growing distaste to capital punishments. He believed, not in the ultimate *perfection* of mankind, but in their progressive *perfectibility*. He thought that improvement was indefinite ; but he did not place its advance more under Republican than under Monarchical forms. " Provided," he was wont to say,

“all our checks to power are of the right kind, it matters little to what hands the power itself is confided.”

“Ægina and Athens,” said he, “were republics—commercial and maritime—placed under the same sky, surrounded by the same neighbours, and rent by the same struggles between oligarchy and democracy. Yet, while one left the world an immortal heir-loom of genius—where are the poets, the philosophers, the statesmen, of the other? Arrian tells us of republics in India—still supposed to exist by modern investigators—but they are not more productive of liberty of thought, or ferment of intellect, than the principalities. In Italy there were commonwealths as liberal as the republic of Florence; but they did not produce a Machiavelli or a Dante. What daring thought—what gigantic speculation—what democracy of wisdom and genius have sprung up amongst the despotisms of Germany! You cannot educate two individuals so as to produce the

same results from both ; you cannot, by similar constitutions (which are the education of nations) produce the same results from different communities. The proper object of statesmen should be, to give every facility to the people to develop themselves ; and every facility to philosophy to dispute and discuss as to the ultimate objects to be obtained. But you cannot, as a practical legislator, place your country under a melon-frame : it must grow of its own accord."

I do not say whether or not De Montaigne was wrong ; but Maltravers saw at least that he was faithful to his theories ; that all his motives were sincere—all his practice pure. He could not but allow, too, that, in his occupations and labours, De Montaigne appeared to feel a sublime enjoyment ;—that, in linking all the powers of his mind to active and useful objects, De Montaigne was infinitely happier than the Philosophy of Indifference, the scorn of ambition, had made Maltravers. The in-

fluence exercised by the large-souled and practical Frenchman over the fate and the history of Maltravers, was very peculiar. He had not, apparently and directly, operated upon his outward destinies ; but he had done so indirectly, by operating on his mind. Perhaps it was he who had consolidated the first wavering and uncertain impulses of Maltravers towards literary exertion ;—it was he who had consoled him for the mortifications at the early part of his career ; and now, perhaps, he might serve, in the full vigour of his intellect, permanently to reconcile the Englishman to the claims of life.

There were, indeed, certain conversations which Maltravers held with De Montaigne, the germ and pith of which it is necessary that I should place before the reader,—for I write the inner as well as the outer history of a man—and the great incidents of life are not brought about only by the dramatic agencies of others, but also by our own reasonings and habits of

thought. What I am now about to set down may be wearisome, but it is not episodal; and I promise that it shall be the last didactic conversation in the work.

One day, Maltravers was relating to De Montaigne all that he had been planning at Burleigh for the improvement of his peasantry, and all his theories respecting Labour-Schools and Poor-rates, when De Montaigne abruptly turned round, and said—

“ You have, then, really found that in your own little village, your exertions—exertions not very arduous, not demanding a tenth part of your time—have done practical good.”

“ Certainly, I think so,” replied Maltravers, in some surprise.

“ And yet it was but yesterday, that you declared ‘ that all the labours of Philosophy and Legislation were labours vain ; their benefits equivocal and uncertain ; that, as the sea, where it loses in one place, gains in another ; so civilization only partially profits us, stealing

away one virtue while it yields another, and leaving the large proportions of good and evil eternally the same.’ ”

“ True ; but I never said that man might not relieve individuals by individual exertion ; though he cannot by abstract theories—nay, even by practical action in the wide circle,—benefit the mass.”

“ Do you not employ on behalf of individuals the same moral agencies that wise legislation or sound philosophy would adopt towards the multitude ? For example, you find that the children of your village are happier, more orderly, more obedient, promise to be wiser and better men in their own station of life, from the new, and I grant excellent, system of school discipline and teaching that you have established. What you have done in one village, why should not legislation do throughout a kingdom ? Again, you find that, by simply holding out hope and emulation to industry—by making stern distinctions be-

tween the energetic and the idle—the independent exertion and the pauper-mendicancy—you have found a lever by which you have literally moved and shifted the little world around you. But what is the difference here between the rules of a village lord, and the laws of a wise legislature? The moral feelings you have appealed to exist universally—the moral remedies you have practised are as open to legislation as to the individual proprietor.”

“ Yes ; but when you apply to a nation the same principles which regenerate a village, new counterbalancing principles arise. If I give education to my peasants, I send them into the world with advantages *superior* to their fellows ; advantages which, not being common to their class, enable them to *outstrip* their fellows. But if this education were universal to the whole tribe, no man would have an advantage superior to the others ; the knowledge they would have acquired being shared by all, would leave all as they now

arc, hewers of wood and drawers of water : the principle of individual hope which springs from knowledge, would soon be baffled by the vast competition that *universal* knowledge would produce. Thus by the universal improvement would be engendered an universal discontent.

“Take a broader view of the subject. Advantages given to the *few* around me—superior wages—lighter toils—a greater sense of the dignity of man—are not productive of any change in society. Give these advantages to the *whole mass* of the labouring classes, and what in the small orbit is the desire of the *individual* to rise, becomes in the large circumference the desire of the *class* to rise ; hence social restlessness, social change, revolution and its hazards : For revolutions are produced but by the aspirations of one order, and the resistance of the other. Consequently, legislative improvement differs widely from individual ameliora-

tion; the same principle, the same agency, that purifies the small body, becomes destructive when applied to the large one;—apply the flame to the log on the hearth, or apply it to the forest, is there no distinction in the result?—the breeze that freshens the fountain passes to the ocean, current impels current, wave urges wave, and the breeze becomes the storm!”

“ Were there truth in this train of argument,” replied De Montaigne; “ had we ever abstained from communicating to the Multitude the enjoyments and advantages of the Few—had we shrunk from the good, because the good is a parent of the change and its partial ills, — what now would be society? Is there no difference in collective happiness and virtue between the painted Picts and the Druid worship, and the glorious harmony, light and order of the great English nation? ”

“ The question is popular,” said Maltravers, with a smile, “ and, were you my opponent in an election, would be cheered on any hustings

in the kingdom. But I have lived among savage tribes—savage, perhaps, as the race that resisted Cæsar; and their happiness seems to me, not perhaps the same as that of the few whose sources of enjoyment are numerous, refined, and, save by their own passions, unalloyed; but equal to that of the mass of men in states the most civilized and advanced. The artizans, crowded together in the foetid air of factories, with physical ills gnawing at the core of the constitution, from the cradle to the grave; drudging on from dawn to sunset, and flying for recreation to the dread excitement of the dram-shop, or the wild and vain hopes of political fanaticism,—are not in my eyes happier than the wild Indians with hardy frames, and calm tempers—seasoned to the privations for which you pity them—and uncursed with desires of that better state, never to be theirs. The Arab in his desert, has seen all the luxuries of the Pacha in his harem; but he envies them not. He is con-

tented with his barb, his tent, his desolate sands, and his spring of refreshing water.

“Are we not daily told—do not our priests preach it from their pulpits—that the cottage shelters happiness equal to that within the palace? Yet what the distinction between the peasant and the prince, differing from that between the peasant and the savage? there are more enjoyments and more privations in the one than in the other; but if, in the latter case, the enjoyments though fewer be more keenly felt,—if the privations, though apparently sharper, fall upon duller sensibilities and hardier frames,—your gauge of proportion loses all its value. Nay, in civilization, there is for the multitude an evil that exists not in the savage state. The poor man sees daily and hourly all the vast disparities produced by civilized society; and, reversing the divine parable—it is Lazarus who from afar, and from the despondent pit, looks upon Dives in the lap of Paradise —therefore his privations, his sufferings,

are made more keen by comparison with the luxuries of others. Not so in the desert and the forest. There, but small distinctions, and those softened by immemorial and hereditary usage—that has in it the sanctity of religion—separate the savage from his chief! The fact is, that in civilization we behold a splendid aggregate:—literature and science, wealth and luxury, commerce and glory; but we see not the million victims crushed beneath the wheels of the machine—the health sacrificed—the board breadless—the gaols filled—the hospitals reeking—the human life poisoned in every spring, and poured forth like water! Neither do we remember all the steps, marked by desolation, crime, and bloodshed, by which this barren summit has been reached. Take the history of any civilized state—England, France, Spain before she rotted back into second childhood—the Italian Republics—the Greek Commonwealths—the crowned Harlot of the

Seven Hills—what struggles, what persecutions, what crimes, what massacres! Where, in the page of history, shall we look back and say ‘here improvement has diminished the sum of evil?’ Extend, too, your scope beyond the state itself: each state has won its acquisitions by the woes of others. Spain springs above the Old World on the blood-stained ruins of the New; and the groans and the gold of Mexico produce the splendours of the Fifth Charles!

“Behold England—the wise, the liberal, the free England—through what struggles she has passed; and is she yet contented? The sullen oligarchy of the Normans—our own criminal invasions of Scotland and France—the plundered people—the butchered kings—the persecutions of the Lollards—the Wars of Lancaster and York—the new dynasty of the Tudors, that at once put back Liberty, and put forward Civilization!—the Reformation, cradled in the lap of a hideous despot, and

nursed by Violence and Rapine—the stakes and fires of Mary; and the craftier cruelties of Elizabeth;—England, strengthened by the desolation of Ireland—the Civil Wars—the reign of Hypocrisy followed by the reign of naked Vice;—the nation that beheaded the graceful Charles gaping idly on the scaffold of the lofty Sidney;—the vain Revolution of 1688, which, if a jubilee in England, was a massacre in Ireland—the bootless glories of Marlborough—the organized corruption of Walpole—the frantic war with our own American sons—the exhausting struggle with Napoleon!

“Well, we close the page—we say, Lo! a thousand years of incessant struggles and afflictions!—millions have perished, but Art has survived; our boors wear stockings, our women drink tea, our poets read Shakspeare, and our astronomers improve on Newton! Are we now contented? No! more restless than ever. New classes are called into power: new forms of government

insisted on. Still the same catch-words — Liberty here, Religion there—Order with one faction; Amelioration with the other. Where is the goal, and what have we gained? Books are written, silks are woven, palaces are built —mighty acquisitions for the few—but the peasant is a peasant still! The crowd are yet at the bottom of the wheel; better off you say. No—for they are not more contented! The Artisan is as anxious for change as ever the Serf was; and the steam-engine has its victims as well as the sword.

“Talk of legislation; all isolated laws pave the way to wholesale changes in the form of government! Emancipate Catholics, and you open the door to the democratic principle, that Opinion should be free. If free with the sectarian, it should be free with the elector. The Ballot is a corollary from the Catholic Relief bill. Grant the Ballot, and the new corollary of enlarged suffrage. — Suffrage enlarged is divided but by a yielding surface (a circle

widening in the waters) from universal suffrage. Universal suffrage is Democracy. Is democracy better than the aristocratic commonwealth? Look at the Greeks, who knew both forms, are they agreed which is the best? Plato, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristophanes—the Dreamer, the Historian, the Philosophic Man of Action, the penetrating Wit—have no ideals in Democracy! Algernon Sidney, the martyr of liberty, allows no government to the multitude. Brutus died for a republic, but a republic of Patricians! What form of government is, then, the best? All dispute—the wisest cannot agree. The Many still say ‘a Republic;’ yet, as you yourself will allow, Prussia, the Despotism, does all that Republics do.—Yes, but a good Despot is a lucky accident; true, but a just and benevolent Republic is as yet a monster equally short lived. When the People have no other tyrant, their own public opinion becomes one. No secret espionage is more intolerable, to a free spirit, than the broad glare of the American eye.

“A rural republic is but a patriarchal tribe—no emulation, no glory;—peace and stagnor. What Englishman—what Frenchman, would wish to be a Swiss? A commercial republic is but an admirable machine for making money. Is Man created for nothing nobler, than freighting ships, and speculating on silk and sugar? In fact, there is no certain goal in legislation; we go on colonizing Utopia, and fighting phantoms in the clouds. Let us content ourselves with injuring no man, and doing good only in our own little sphere. Let us leave states and senates to fill the sieve of the Danaides, and roll up the stone of Sisyphus.”

“My dear friend,” said De Montaigne, “you have certainly made the most of an argument, which, if granted, would consign government to fools and knaves, and plunge the communities of mankind into the Slough of Despond. But a very common-place view of the question might suffice to shake your

system. Is life, mere animal life, on the whole, a curse or a blessing?"

"The generality of men in all countries," answered Maltravers, "enjoy existence, and apprehend death;—were it otherwise, the world had been made by a Fiend, and not a God!"

"Well, then, observe how the progress of society cheats the grave! In great cities, where the effect of civilization must be the most visible, the dimunition of mortality in a corresponding ratio with the increase of civilization is most remarkable. In Berlin, from the year 1747 to 1755, the annual mortality was as one to twenty-eight; but from 1816 to 1822 it was as one to thirty-four! You ask what England has gained by her progress in the arts? I will answer you by her bills of mortality. In London, Birmingham, and Liverpool, deaths have decreased in less than a century from one to twenty, to one to forty (precisely one-half!). Again, whenever a

community—nay, a single city, decreases in civilization, and in its concomitants, activity and commerce, its mortality instantly increases. But if civilization be favourable to the prolongation of life, must it not be favourable to all that blesses life—to bodily health, to mental cheerfulness, to the capacities for enjoyment?—and how much more grand—how much more sublime, becomes the prospect of gain, if we reflect that, to each life thus called forth, there is a soul—a destiny beyond the grave,—multiplied immortalities! What an apology for the continued progress of states! But you say that, however we advance, we continue impatient and dissatisfied: can you really suppose that, because man in every state is discontented with his lot, there is no difference in the *degree* and *quality* of his discontent—no distinction between pining for bread, and longing for the moon? Desire is implanted within us, as the very principle of existence; the physical desire fills the world,

and the moral desire improves it; where there is desire, there must be discontent; if we are satisfied with all things, desire is extinct. But a certain degree of discontent is not incompatible with happiness, nay, it has happiness of its own; what happiness like hope—what is hope, but desire? The European serf, whose seigneur could command his life, or insist as a right on the chastity of his daughter, desires to better his condition. God has compassion on his state; Providence calls into action the ambition of leaders, the contests of faction, the movement of men's aims and passions: a change passes through society and legislation, and the serf becomes free! He desires still, but what?—no longer personal security, no longer the privileges of life and health; but higher wages, greater comfort, easier justice for diminished wrongs. Is there no difference in the quality of that desire? Was one a greater torment than the other is? Rise a scale higher:—A new class is created—the

Middle Class—the express creature of Civilization. Behold the burgher and the citizen, still struggling, still contending, still desiring, and therefore still discontented. But the discontent does not prey upon the springs of life: it is the discontent of *hope*, not of *despair*; it calls forth faculties, energies, and passions, in which there is more joy than sorrow. It is this desire which makes the citizen in private life an anxious father, a careful master, an *active*, and therefore not an unhappy, man. You allow that individuals can effect individual good: this very restlessness, this very discontent with the exact place that he occupies, makes the citizen a benefactor in his narrow circle. Commerce, better than charity, feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked. Ambition, better than brute affection, gives education to our children, and teaches them the love of industry, the pride of independence, the respect for others and themselves ! ”

“ In other words, a deference to such qua-

lities as can best fit them to get on in the world and make the most money !”

“ Take that view if you will; but the wiser, the more civilized the state, the worse chances for the rogue to get on !—there may be some art, some hypocrisy, some avarice, nay some hardness of heart, in paternal example and professional tuition. But what are such sober infirmities to the vices that arise from defiance and despair? Your savage has his virtues, but they are mostly physical, fortitude, abstinence, patience :— Mental and moral virtues must be numerous or few in proportion to the range of ideas and the exigencies of social life ; With the savage, therefore, they must be fewer than with civilized men ; and they are consequently limited to those simple and rude elements which the safety of his state renders necessary to him. He is usually hospitable ; sometimes honest. But vices are necessary to his existence, as well as virtues : he is at war with a tribe that may destroy his own ; and

treachery without scruple, cruelty without remorse, are essential to him; he feels their necessity, and calls them *virtues*! Even the half-civilized man, the Arab, whom you praise, imagines he has a necessity for your money; and his robberies become virtues to him. But in civilized states, vices are at least not necessary to the existence of the majority; they are not, therefore, worshipped as virtues. Society unites against them; treachery, robbery, massacre, are not essential to the strength or safety of the community: they exist, it is true, but they are not cultivated, but punished. The thief in St. Giles's has the virtues of your savage: he is true to his companions, he is brave in danger, he is patient in privation; he practises the virtues necessary to the bonds of his calling and the tacit laws of his vocation. He might have made an admirable savage; but surely the mass of civilized men are better than the thief?"

Maltravers was struck, and paused a little

before he replied; and then he shifted his ground. "But at least all our laws, all our efforts, must leave the multitude in every state condemned to a labour that deadens intellect, and a poverty that embitters life."

"Supposing this were true, still there are multitudes besides *the* multitude. In each state, Civilization produces a middle class, more numerous to-day than the whole peasantry of a thousand years ago. Would Movement and Progress be without their divine uses, even if they limited their effect to the production of such a class? Look also to the effect of art, and refinement, and just laws, in the wealthier and higher classes. See how their very habits of life tend to increase the sum of enjoyment—see the mighty activity that their very luxury, the very frivolity of their pursuits, create! Without an aristocracy, would there have been a middle class? without a middle class, would there ever have been an interposition between lord and slave? Before Commerce produces

a middle class, Religion creates one. The Priesthood, whatever its errors, was the curb to Power. But, to return to the Multitude—you say that in all times they are left the same. Is it so? I come to statistics again: I find that not only civilization, but liberty, has a prodigious effect upon human life. It is, as it were, by the instinct of self-preservation that liberty is so passionately desired by the multitude. A negro slave, for instance, dies annually as one to five or six, but a free African in the English service only as one to thirty-five! Freedom is not, therefore, a mere abstract dream—a beautiful name—a Platonic aspiration—it is interwoven with the most practical of all blessings, life itself! And can you say fairly, that, by laws, labour cannot be lightened and poverty diminished? We have granted already, that since there are degrees in discontent, there is a difference between the peasant and the serf;—how know you what the peasant a thousand years hence may be?

Discontented, you will say—still discontented. Yes; but if he had not been discontented, he would have been a serf still! Far from quelling this desire to better himself, we ought to hail it as the source of his perpetual progress. That desire to him is often like imagination to the poet, it transports him into the Future—

Spes fovet agricolas

Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus—

it is, indeed, the gradual transformation from the desire of Despair to the desire of Hope, that makes the difference between man and man—between misery and bliss.”

“And then comes the crisis. Hope ripens into deeds; the stormy revolution, perhaps the armed despotism; the relapse into the second infancy of states!”

“Can we, with new agencies at our command—new morality—new wisdom—predicate of the Future by the Past. In ancient states, the mass were slaves; civilization and freedom rested with oligarchies;—in Athens 20,000

citizens, 400,000 slaves! How easy decline, degeneracy, overthrow, in such states—a handful of soldiers and philosophers without a People! Now we have no longer, barriers to the circulation of the blood of states. The absence of slavery, the existence of the Press; the healthful proportions of kingdoms neither too confined, nor too vast; have created new hopes, which history cannot destroy. As a proof, look to all late revolutions: in England the Civil Wars—the Reformation,—in France her awful saturnalia—her military despotism! Has either nation fallen back? The deluge passes, and behold, the face of things more glorious than before! Compare the French of to-day with the French of the old *regime*. You are silent; well, and if in all states there is ever some danger of evil in their activity, is that a reason why you are to lie down inactive?—why you are to leave the crew to battle for the helm?—How much may individuals, by the diffusion of their own thoughts—in letters

or in action—regulate the order of vast events—now prevent—now soften—now animate—now guide! And is a man, to whom Providence and Fortune have imparted such prerogatives, to stand aloof, because he can neither foresee the Future, nor create Perfection?—And you talk of no certain and definite goal! How know we that there is a certain and definite goal, even in Heaven? how know we that excellence may not be illimitable? Enough that we improve—that we proceed: Seeing in the great design of earth that benevolence is an attribute of the Designer, let us leave the rest to Posterity, and to God.”

“You have disturbed many of my theories,” said Maltravers, candidly; “and I will reflect on our conversation; but, after all, is every man to aspire to influence others? to throw his opinions into the great scales in which human destinies are weighed? Private life is not criminal. It is no virtue to write a book, or to make a speech. Perhaps I should be as

well engaged in returning to my country village, looking at my schools, and wrangling with the parish overseers——”

“ Ah,” interrupted the Frenchman, laughing; “ if I have driven you to this point, I will go no further. Every state of life has its duties; every man must be himself the judge of what he is most fit for. It is quite enough that he desires to be active, and labours to be useful; that he acknowledges the precept, “ never to be weary in well-doing.” The divine appetite once fostered, let it select its own food. But the man who, after fair trial of his capacities, and with all opportunity for their full development before him, is convinced that he has faculties which private life cannot wholly absorb, must not repine that Human Nature is not perfect, when he refuses even to exercise the gifts he himself possesses.”

Now these arguments have been very te-

dious; in some places they have been old and trite; in others they may appear too much to appertain to the abstract theory of first principles. Yet from such arguments—*pro* and *con*—unless I greatly mistake, are to be derived corollaries equally practical and sublime; the virtue of Action—the obligations of Genius—and the philosophy that teaches us to confide in the destinies, and labour in the service, of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

“I’ll tell you presently her very picture :
Stay—yes it is so—Lelia.”

The Captain, Act v. Scene 1.

MALTRAVERS had not shrunk into a system of false philosophy, from wayward and sickly dreams, from resolute self-delusion ; on the contrary, his errors rested on his convictions—the convictions disturbed, the errors were rudely shaken.

But when his mind began restlessly to turn once more towards the duties of active life ; when he recalled all the former drudgeries and toils of political conflict, or the wearing

fatigues of literature, with its small enmities, its false friendships, and its meagre and capricious rewards ;—ah ! then, indeed, he shrunk in dismay from the thoughts of the solitude at home ! No lips to console in dejection, no heart to sympathize in triumph, no love within to counterbalance the hate without—and the best of man, his household affections, left to wither away, or to waste themselves on ideal images, or melancholy remembrance.

It may, indeed, be generally remarked (contrary to a common notion), that the men who are most happy at home, are the most active abroad. The animal spirits are necessary to healthful action ; and dejection and the sense of solitude, will turn the stoutest into dreamers. The hermit is the antipodes of the citizen ; and no gods animate and inspire us like the Lares.

One evening, after an absence from Paris of nearly a fortnight, at De Montaigne's villa, in

the neighbourhood of St. Cloud, Maltravers, who, though he no longer practised the art, was not less fond than heretofore of music, was seated in Madame de St. Ventadour's box at the Italian Opera, and Valerie, who was above all the woman's jealousy of beauty, was expatiating with great warmth of eulogium upon the charms of a young English lady whom she had met at Lady G——'s the preceding evening—

“She is just my *beau ideal* of the true English beauty,” said Valerie—“it is not only the exquisite fairness of the complexion, nor the eyes so purely blue, which the dark lashes relieve from the coldness common to the light eyes of the Scotch and Germans,—that are so beautifully national, but the simplicity of manner, the unconsciousness of admiration, the mingled modesty and sense of the expression. No, I have seen women more beautiful, but I never saw one more lovely—you are silent—

I expected some burst of patriotism in return for my compliment to your countrywoman !”

“But I am so absorbed in that wonderful Pasta—”

“You are no such thing ; your thoughts are far away. But can you tell me anything about my fair stranger and her friends ? In the first place, there is a Lord Doltimore, whom I knew before,—you need say nothing about him ; in the next, there is his new-married bride, handsome, dark—but you are not well !”

“It was the draught from the door—go on I beseech you—the young lady—the friend, her name ?”

“Her name I do not remember ; but she was engaged to be married to one of your statesmen, Lord Vargrave—the marriage is broken off—I know not if that be the cause of a certain melancholy in her countenance—a melancholy I am sure not natural to its Hebe-like expression.—But who have just entered

the opposite box? ah, Mr. Maltravers, do look, there is the beautiful English girl!"

And Maltravers raised his eyes and once more beheld the countenance of Evelyn Cameron!

END OF BOOK SIXTH.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

Δύκησις ἀγνῶς λόγων
ἦλθε.

SOPH. *Œdip. Tyran.* 681.

“ Words of dark import gave suspicion birth.”

POTTER.

CHAPTER I.

“LUCE. Is the wind there?
That makes for me.

ISAB. Come—I forget a business.”
Wit without Money.

LORD Vargrave's travelling carriage was at his door—and he himself was putting on his great-coat in his library—when Lord Saxingham entered.

“What!—you are going into the country?”

“Yes—I wrote you word—to see Lisle Court.”

“Ay, true,—I had forgot. Somehow or other, my memory is not so good as it was.”

“But, let me see, Lisle Court is in ——

shire. Why you will pass within ten miles of C*****.”

“ C*****! shall I? I am not much versed in the geography of England—never learnt it at school. As for Poland—Kamschatka—Mexico—Madagascar,—or any other place as to which knowledge would be *useful*,—I have every inch of the way at my finger’s end. But *apropos* of C*****, it is the town in which my late uncle made his fortune.”

“ Ah, so it is. I recollect you were to have stood for C*****, but gave it up to Staunch,—very handsome in you. Have you any interest there still?”

“ I think my ward has some tenants,—a street or two,—one called Richard Street and the other Templeton Place. I had intended some weeks ago to have gone down there, and seen what interest was still left to our family,—but Staunch himself told me that C***** was a sure card.”

“ So he thought—but he has been with me

this morning in great alarm—he now thinks he shall be thrown out. A Mr. Winsley—who has a great deal of interest there, and was a supporter of his—hangs back on account of the —— question. This is unlucky,—as Staunch is quite with *us*,—and if he were to rat now, it would be most unfortunate.”

“ Winsley — Winsley, — my poor uncle’s right-hand man. A great brewer—always chairman of the Templeton Committee. I know the name—though I never saw the man.”

“ If you could take C***** in your way ? ”

“ To be sure. Staunch must not be lost. We cannot throw away a single vote—much more one of such weight—eighteen stone at the least ! I’ll stop at C*****, on pretence of seeing after my ward’s houses,—and have a quiet conference with Mr. Winsley Hem ! Peers must not interfere in elections—eh ? Well, good bye,—take care of yourself, I shall be back in a week, I hope,—perhaps less.”

In a minute more, Lord Vargrave and Mr. George Frederick Augustus Howard, a slim young gentleman of high birth and connexions, but who having, as a portionless cadet, his own way to make in the world, condescended to be his Lordship's private secretary, —were rattling over the streets the first stage to C*****.

It was late at night when Lord Vargrave arrived at the head inn of that grave and respectable cathedral city,—in which once Richard Templeton, Esq.,—saint—banker—and politician,—had exercised his dictatorial sway. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* As he warmed his hands by the fire in the large wainscoted apartment into which he was shown—his eye met a full-length engraving of his uncle, with a roll of paper in his hands, —meant for a Parliamentary Bill for the turnpike trusts in the neighbourhood of C*****. The sight brought back his recollections of that pious and saturnine relation,—and insensibly

the Minister's thoughts flew to his death-bed,—and to the strange secret which in that last hour he had revealed to Lumley,—a secret which had done much in deepening Lord Vargrave's contempt for the forms and conventionalities of decorous life. And here it may be mentioned—though in the course of these volumes a penetrating reader may have guessed as much—that, whatever that secret,—it did not refer expressly or exclusively to the late Lord's singular and ill-assorted marriage. Upon that point much was still left obscure to arouse Lumley's curiosity—had he been a man whose curiosity was very vivacious. But on this he felt but little interest. He knew enough to believe that no further information could benefit himself personally,—why should he trouble his head with what never would fill his pockets?

An audible yawn from the slim Secretary roused Lord Vargrave from his reverie.

“I envy you, my young friend,” said he

good-humouredly. "It is a pleasure we lose as we grow older—that of being sleepy. However, 'to bed,'—as Lady Macbeth says. Faith, I don't wonder the poor devil of a thane was slow in going to bed with such a tigress. Good night to you."

CHAPTER II.

“ Ma fortune va prendre une face nouvelle.”

RACINE, *Androm.* Act i. sc. i.

THE next morning Vargrave inquired the way to Mr. Winsley's, and walked alone to the house of the brewer. The slim Secretary went to inspect the cathedral.

Mr. Winsley was a little, thick-set man, with a civil but blunt electioneering manner. He started when he heard Lord Vargrave's name, and bowed with great stiffness. Vargrave saw at a glance, that there was some cause of grudge in the mind of the worthy man ; nor did Mr.

Winsley long hesitate before he cleansed his bosom of its perilous stuff.

“ This is an unexpected honour, my Lord : I don’t know how to account for it.”

“ Why, Mr. Winsley, your friendship with my late uncle can, perhaps, sufficiently explain and apologise for a visit from a nephew sincerely attached to his memory.”

“ Humph !—I certainly did do all in my power to promote Mr. Templeton’s interests. No man, I may say, did more ; and yet I don’t think it was much thought of, the moment he turned his back upon the electors of C****. Not that I bear any malice ;—I am well to do, and value no man’s favour—no man’s, my Lord !”

“ You amaze me !—I always heard my poor uncle speak of you in the highest terms.”

“ Oh !—well it’s no matter — pray say no more of it. Can I offer your Lordship a glass of wine ?”

“ No, I am much obliged to you ; but we”

really must set this little matter right. You know, that after his marriage, my uncle never revisited C***** ; and that, shortly before his death, he sold the greater part of his interest in this city. His young wife, I suppose, liked the neighbourhood of London ; and when elderly gentlemen *do* marry, you know, they are no longer their own masters ;—but if you had ever come to Fulham—ah ! then, indeed, my uncle would have rejoiced to see his old friend.”

“ Your Lordship thinks so,” said Mr. Winsley, with a sardonic smile. “ You are mistaken ; I did call at Fulham—and though I sent in my card, Lord Vargrave’s servant (he was then My Lord) brought back word that his Lordship was not at home.”

“ But that must have been true—he was out, you may depend on it.”

“ I saw him at the window, my Lord,” said Mr. Winsley, taking a pinch of snuff.

(Oh, the deuce ! I’m in for it, thought

Lumley). "Very strange, indeed!—but how can you account for it?—Ah! perhaps the health of Lady Vargrave—she was so very delicate then, and my poor uncle lived for her—you know that he left all his fortune to Miss Cameron?"

"Miss Cameron!—who is she, my Lord?"

"Why, his daughter-in-law; Lady Vargrave was a widow—a Mrs. Cameron."

"Mrs. Cam——, I remember now—they put Cameron in the newspapers, but I thought it was a mistake;—but, perhaps," (added Winsley, with a sneer of peculiar malignity)—"perhaps, when your worthy uncle thought of being a peer, he did not like to have it known that he married so much beneath him."

"You quite mistake, my dear Sir, my uncle never denied that Mrs. Cameron was a lady of no fortune or connexions—widow to some poor Scotch gentleman, who died, I think, in India."

"He left her very ill off, poor thing; but

she had a great deal of merit, and worked hard—she taught my girls to play——”

“Your girls!—did Mrs. Cameron ever reside in C*****?”

“To be sure; but she was then called Mrs. Butler—just as pretty a name, to my fancy.”

“You must make a mistake; my uncle married this lady in Devonshire.”

“Very possibly,” quoth the brewer, doggedly. “Mrs. Butler left the town with her little girl, some time before Mr. Templeton married.”

“Well, you are wiser than I am,” said Lumley, forcing a smile; “but how can you be sure that Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Cameron are one and the same person;—you did not go into the house—you could not have seen Lady Vargrave” (and here Lumley shrewdly guessed—if the tale were true—at the cause of his uncle’s exclusion of his old acquaintance).

“No; but I saw her ladyship on the lawn,” said Mr. Winsley, with another sardonic smile; “and I asked the porter at the lodge as I went out, if that was Lady Vargrave, and he said ‘yes.’ However, my Lord, by-gones are by-gones—I bear no malice;—your uncle was a good man; and if he had but said to me, ‘Winsley, don’t say a word about Mrs. Butler,’ he might have reckoned on me just as much, as when in his elections he used to put five thousand pounds in my hands, and say, ‘Winsley—no bribery—it is wicked; let this be given in charity.’—Did any one ever know how that money went? Was your uncle ever accused of corruption?—But, my Lord, surely you will take some refreshment?”

“No, indeed—but if you will let me dine with you to-morrow, you’ll oblige me much;—and whatever my uncle’s faults—(and latterly, poor man, he was hardly in his senses;—what a will he made!)—let not the nephew suffer

for them. Come, Mr. Winsley," and Lumley held out his hand with enchanting frankness, "you know my motives are disinterested—I have no parliamentary interest to serve—we have no constituents for our Hospital of Incurables;—and—oh! that's right—we're friends, I see! Now, I must go and look after my ward's houses;—let me see, the agent's name is—is—"

"Perkins, I think, my Lord," said Mr. Winsley, thoroughly softened by the charm of Vargrave's words and manner; "let me put on my hat, and show you his house."

"Will you?—that's very kind;—give me all the election news by the way—you know I was once within an ace of being your member."

Vargrave learned from his new friend some further particulars relative to Mrs. Butler's humble habits and homely mode of life at C****, which served completely to explain to him why his proud and

worldly uncle had so carefully abstained from all intercourse with that city, and had prevented the nephew from standing for its vacant representation. It seemed, however, that Winsley—whose resentment was not of a very active or violent kind—had not communicated the discovery he had made to his fellow townspeople; but had contented himself with hints and aphorisms, whenever he had heard the subject of Mr. Templeton's marriage discussed, which had led the gossips of the place to imagine that he had made a much worse selection than he really had. As to the accuracy of Winsley's assertion, Vargrave, though surprised at first, had but little doubt on consideration, especially when he heard that Mrs. Butler's principal patroness had been the Mrs. Leslie, now the intimate friend of Lady Vargrave. But what had been the career—what the earlier condition and struggles of this simple and interesting creature?—

with her appearance at C*****, commenced all that surmise could invent. Not greater was the mystery that wrapped the apparition of Manco Capac by the lake Titiaca, than that which shrouded the places and the trials whence the lowly teacher of music had emerged amidst the streets of C*****.

Weary, and somewhat careless, of conjecture, Lord Vargrave, in dining with Mr. Winsley, turned the conversation upon the business on which he had principally undertaken his journey—viz. the meditated purchase of Lisle Court.

“I myself am not a very good judge of landed property,” said Vargrave; “I wish I knew of an experienced surveyor to look over the farms and timber; can you help me to such a one?”

Mr. Winsley smiled, and glanced at a rosy-cheeked young lady, who simpered and turned away. “I think my daughter could recommend one to your Lordship, if she dared.”

“Oh, Pa!”

"I see. Well, Miss Winsley, I will take no recommendation but yours."

Miss Winsley made an effort.

"Indeed, my Lord, I have always heard Mr. Robert Hobbs considered very clever in his profession."

"Mr. Robert Hobbs is my man! His good health—and a fair wife to him."

Miss Winsley glanced at mamma, and then at a younger sister, and then there was a titter—and then a fluttering—and then a rising—and Mr. Winsley, Lord Vargrave, and the slim Secretary were left alone.

"Really, my Lord," said the host, resettling himself, and pushing the wine—"though you have guessed our little family arrangement, and I have some interest in the recommendation,—since Margaret will be Mrs. Robert Hobbs in a few weeks—yet I do not know a more acute, intelligent young man anywhere. Highly respectable, with an independent fortune: his father is lately dead, and made at

least thirty thousand pounds in trade. His brother Edward is also dead, so he has the bulk of the property, and he follows his profession merely for amusement. He would consider it a great honour."

"And where does he live?"

"Oh, not in this county—a long way off; close to ——; but it is all in your Lordship's road. A very nice house he has too. I have known his family since I was a boy: it is astonishing how his father improved the place;—it was a poor little lath-and-plaster cottage when he bought it, and it is now a very excellent family house."

"Well, you shall give me the address and a letter of introduction, and so much for that matter. But to return to politics;" and here Lord Vargrave ran eloquently on, till Mr. Winsley thought him the only man in the world who could save the country from that utter annihilation—the possibility of which he had never even suspected before.

It may be as well to add, that, on wishing Lord Vargrave good night, Mr. Winsley whispered in his ear "Your Lordship's friend Lord Staunch need be under no apprehension — We are all right!"

CHAPTER III.

“ This is the house, Sir.”

Love's Pilgrimage.—Act. iv., s. 2.

“ Redeunt Saturnia regna.”

VIRGIL.

THE next morning, Lumley and his slender companion were rolling rapidly over the same road on which—sixteen years ago,—way-worn and weary, Alice Darvil had first met with Mr. Leslie; they were talking about a new opera dancer as they whirled by the very spot.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, the next day, when the carriage stopped at a cast-iron gate, on which was inscribed this epigraph, —“ Hobbs' Lodge—Ring the Bell.”

"A snug place enough," said Lord Vargrave, as they were waiting the arrival of the footman to unbar the gate.

"Yes," said Mr. Howard. "If a retired Cit could be transformed into a house, such is the house he would be."

Poor Dale Cottage! the home of Poetry and Passion! But change visits the Common-place as well as the Romantic. Since Alice had pressed to that cold grating her wistful eyes, time had wrought its allotted revolutions—the old had died—the young grown up. Of the children playing on the lawn, death had claimed some, and marriage others;—and the holiday of youth was gone for all.

The servant opened the gate. Mr. Robert Hobbs *was* at home;—he had friends with him—he was engaged. Lord Vargrave sent in his card, and the introductory letter from Mr. Winsley. In two seconds, these missives brought to the gate Mr. Robert Hobbs himself:—a smart young man, with a black stock,

red whiskers, and an eye-glass, pendant to a hair-chain which was possibly a *gage d'amour* from Miss Margaret Winsley.

A profusion of bows, compliments, apologies, &c.; the carriage drove up the sweep, and Lord Vargrave descended, and was immediately ushered into Mr. Hobbs' private room. The slim Secretary followed, and sat silent, melancholy, and upright, while the peer affably explained his wants and wishes to the surveyor.

Mr. Hobbs was well acquainted with the locality of Lisle Court—which was little more than thirty miles distant—He should be proud to accompany Lord Vargrave thither the next morning. But, might he venture—might he dare—might he presume,—a gentleman who lived at the town of —, was to dine with him that day; a gentleman of the most profound knowledge of agricultural affairs;—a gentleman who knew every farm, almost every acre, belonging to Colonel Maltravers—if his Lord-

ship could be induced to waive ceremony—and dine with Mr. Hobbs—it might be really useful to meet this gentleman. The slim Secretary, who was very hungry, and who thought he sniffed an uncommonly savoury smell, looked up from his boots,—Lord Vargrave smiled.

“My young friend here is too great an admirer of Mrs. Hobbs—who is to be,—not to feel anxious to make the acquaintance of any members of the family she is to enter.”

Mr. George Frederick Augustus Howard blushed indignant refutation of the calumnious charge.—Vargrave continued.

“As for me—I shall be delighted to meet any friends of yours, and am greatly obliged for your consideration. We may dismiss the postboys, Howard,—and what time shall we summon them?—ten o'clock?”

“If your Lordship would condescend to accept a bed,—we can accommodate your Lordship and this gentleman,—and start at any hour in the morning that——”

“So be it,” interrupted Vargrave. “You speak like a man of business. Howard, be so kind as to order the horses for six o’clock to-morrow. We’ll breakfast at Lisle Court.”

This matter settled,—Lord Vargrave and Mr. Howard were shown into their respective apartments. Travelling dresses were changed—the dinner put back—and the fish over-boiled;—but what mattered common fish, when Mr. Hobbs had just caught such a big one? Of what consequence he should be henceforth and ever! A peer—a minister—a stranger to the county,—to come all this way to consult *him*!—to be *his* guest!—to be shown off—and patted—and trotted out before all the rest of the company! Mr. Hobbs was a made man! Careless of all this,—ever at home with any one,—and delighted, perhaps, to escape a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Howard in a strange inn,—Vargrave lounged into the drawing-room, and was formally presented to the expectant family and the famishing guests.

During the expiring bachelorship of Mr. Robert Hobbs, his sister, Mrs. Tiddy (to whom the reader was first introduced as a bride—gathering the wisdom of economy and large joints from the frugal lips of her mamma), officiated as lady of the house,—a comely matron, and well-preserved,—except that she had lost a front tooth,—in a jaundiced satinet gown,—with a fall of British blonde, and a tucker of the same: Mr. Tiddy being a starch man, and not willing that the luxuriant charms of Mrs. T. should be too temptingly exposed! There was also Mr. Tiddy,—whom his wife had married for love,—and who was now well to do;—a fine-looking man,—with large whiskers and a Roman nose, a little awry. Moreover, there was a Miss Biddy or Bridget Hobbs,—a young lady of four or five and twenty,—who was considering whether she might ask Lord Vargrave to write something in her album,—and who cast a bashful look of admiration at the

slim Secretary, as he now sauntered into the room,—in a black coat—black waistcoat—black trousers—and black neckcloth, with a black pin,—looking much like an ebony cane split half way up. Miss Biddy was a fair young lady—a *leetle* faded—with uncommonly thin arms—and white satin shoes,—on which the slim Secretary cast his eyes and—shuddered!

In addition to the family group, were the Rector of —, an agreeable man,—who published sermons and poetry; also Sir William Jekyll,—who was employing Mr. Hobbs to make a map of an estate he had just purchased; also two country squires and their two wives; moreover, the physician of the neighbouring town,—a remarkably tall man,—who wore spectacles and told anecdotes; and, lastly, Mr. Onslow,—the gentleman to whom Mr. Hobbs had referred,—an elderly man of prepossessing exterior—of high repute as the most efficient magistrate, the best

farmer, and the most sensible person in the neighbourhood. This made the party,—to each individual of which the great man bowed and smiled,—and the great man's Secretary bent, condescendingly, three joints of his backbone.

The bell was now rung—dinner announced. Sir William Jekyll led the way with one of the she squires—and Lord Vargrave offered his arm to the portly Mrs. Tiddy.

Vargrave, as usual, was the life of the feast. Mr. Howard—who sat next to Miss Bridget—conversed with her between the courses, “in dumb show.” Mr. Onslow and the physician played second and third to Lord Vargrave. When the dinner was over—and the ladies had retired—Vargrave found himself seated next to Mr. Onslow,—and discovered in his neighbour a most agreeable companion. They talked principally about Lisle Court,—and from Colonel Maltravers, the conversation turned naturally upon Ernest.

Vargrave proclaimed his early intimacy with the latter gentleman,—complained, feelingly, that politics had divided them of late,—and told two or three anecdotes of their youthful adventures in the East. Mr. Onslow listened to him with much attention.

“I made the acquaintance of Mr. Maltravers many years ago,” said he, “and upon a very delicate occasion. I was greatly interested in him,—I never saw one so young (for he was then but a boy) manifest feelings so deep. By the dates you have referred to, your acquaintance with him must have commenced very shortly after mine. Was he, at that time, cheerful—in good spirits?”

“No, indeed—hypochondriacal to the greatest degree.”

“Your Lordship’s intimacy with him, and the confidence that generally exists between young men, induce me to suppose that he may have told you a little romance connected with his early years.”

Lumley paused to consider; and this conversation, which had been carried on apart, was suddenly broken into by the tall doctor, who wanted to know whether his Lordship had ever heard the anecdote about Lord Thurlow and the late King. The anecdote was as long as the doctor himself; and when it was over, the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room, and all conversation was immediately drowned by. "Row, brothers, row,"—which had only been suspended till the arrival of Mr. Tiddy, who had a fine bass voice.

Alas! eighteen years ago, in that spot of earth, Alice Darvil had first caught the soul of music from the lips of Genius and of Love! But better as it is—less romantic but more proper—as Hobbs Lodge was less pretty, but more safe from the winds and rains, than Dale Cottage.

Miss Bridget ventured to ask the good-humoured Lord Vargrave if he sang? "Not I, Miss Hobbs—but Howard, there—Ah, if

you heard *him!*" The consequence of this hint was, that the unhappy Secretary, who alone, in a distant corner, was unconsciously refreshing his fancy with some cool weak coffee, was instantly beset with applications from Miss Bridget, Mrs. Tiddy, Mr. Tiddy, and the tall doctor, to favour the company with a specimen of his talents. Mr. Howard could sing—he could even play the guitar. But to sing at Hobbs Lodge—to sing to the accompaniment of Mrs. Tiddy—to have his gentle tenor crushed to death in a glee, by the heavy splayfoot of Mr. Tiddy's manly bass—the thought was insufferable! He faltered forth assurances of his ignorance, and hastened to bury his resentment in the retirement of a remote sofa. Vargrave, who had forgotten the significant question of Mr. Onslow, renewed in a whisper his conversation with that gentleman relative to the meditated investment; while Mr. and Mrs. Tiddy sang, "Come dwell with me,"—and Onslow was so pleased with his new

acquaintance, that he volunteered to make a fourth in Lumley's carriage the next morning, and accompany him to Lisle Court. This settled, the party soon afterwards broke up. At midnight Lord Vargrave was fast asleep; and Mr. Howard, tossing restlessly to and fro on his melancholy couch, was revolving all the hardships that await a native of St. James's, who ventures forth among

“ The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders !”

CHAPTER IV.

"But how were these doubts to be change into absolute certainty?"

EDGAR HUNTLEY.

THE next morning, while it was yet dark, Lord Vargrave's carriage picked up Mr. Onslow at the door of a large old-fashioned house, at the entrance of the manufacturing town of —. The party were silent and sleepy, till they arrived at Lisle Court,—the sun had then appeared—the morning was clear—the air frosty and bracing. And as, after traversing a noble park, a superb quadrangular pile of brick, flanked by huge square turrets, coped with

stone, broke upon the gaze of Lord Vargrave, his worldly heart swelled within him, and the image of Evelyn became inexpressibly lovely and seductive.

Though the housekeeper was not prepared for Vargrave's arrival at so early an hour, yet he had been daily expected:—the logs soon burnt bright in the ample hearth of the breakfast-room—the urn hissed—the cutlets smoked,—and while the rest of the party gathered round the fire, and unmuffled themselves of cloaks and shawl handkerchiefs, Vargrave, seizing upon the housekeeper, traversed, with delighted steps, the magnificent suite of rooms—gazed on the pictures—admired the state bed-chambers—peeped into the offices—and recognised in all a mansion worthy of a Peer of England; but which a more prudent man would have thought, with a sigh, required careful management of the rent-roll raised from the property, adequately to equip and maintain. Such an idea did not cross the

mind of Vargrave: he only thought how much he should be honoured and envied, when, as Secretary of State, he should yearly fill those feudal chambers with the pride and rank of England! It was characteristic of the extraordinary sanguineness and self-confidence of Vargrave, that he entirely overlooked one slight obstacle to this prospect, in the determined refusal of Evelyn to accept that passionate homage which he offered to her fortune!

When breakfast was over, the steward was called in, and the party, mounted upon ponies, set out to reconnoitre. After spending the short day most agreeably, in looking over the gardens, pleasure-grounds, park, and home-farm, and settling to visit the more distant parts of the property the next day,—the party were returning home to dine, when Vargrave's eye caught the glittering *whim* of Sir Gregory Gubbins.

He pointed it out to Mr. Onslow, and laughed much at hearing of the annoyance it

occasioned to Colonel Maltravers. "Thus," said Lumley, "do we all crumple the rose-leaf under us, and quarrel with couches the most luxuriant! As for me, I will wager, that were this property mine, or my ward's, in three weeks we should have won the heart of Sir Gregory, made him pull down his *whim*, and, coaxed him out of his interest in the city of —. A good seat for you, Howard, some day or other."

"Sir Gregory has prodigiously bad taste," said Mr. Hobbs; "for my part, I think that, there ought to be a certain modest simplicity in the display of wealth got in business;—that was my poor father's maxim."

"Ah," said Vargrave, "Hobbs Lodge is a specimen—'neat and not gaudy,'—as the devil said, when he painted his tail pea-green. Who was your predecessor in that charming retreat?"

"Why the place—then called Dale Cottage—belonged to a Mr. Berners, a rich bachelor

in business, who was rich enough not to mind what people said of him, and kept a lady there. She ran off from him, and he then let it to some young man—a stranger—very eccentric, I hear—a Mr.—Mr. Butler—and he, too, gave the cottage an unlawful attraction—a most beautiful girl, I have heard.”

“Butler,” echoed Vargrave—“Butler—Butler!”—Lumley recollected that such had been the real name of Mrs. Cameron.

Onslow looked hard at Vargrave. “You recognise the name, my Lord,” said he in a whisper,—as Hobbs had turned to address himself to Mr. Howard—“I thought you very discreet when I asked you, last night, if you remembered the early follies of your friend.” A suspicion at once flashed upon the quick mind of Vargrave:—Butler was a name on the mother’s side in the family of Maltravers; the gloom of Ernest when he first knew him—the boy’s hints that the gloom was connected.

with the affections—the extraordinary and single accomplishment of Lady Vargrave in that art of which Maltravers was so consummate a master—the similarity of name—al taken in conjunction with the meaning question of Mr. Onslow—were enough to suggest to Vargrave that he might be on the verge of a family secret, the knowledge of which could be turned to advantage. He took care not to confess his ignorance, but artfully proceeded to draw out Mr. Onslow's communications.

“Why, it is true,” said he, “that Maltravers and I had no secrets. Ah! we were wild fellows then—the name of Butler is in his family—eh?”

“It is.—I see you know all.”

“Yes;—he told me the story, but it is eighteen years ago. Do refresh my memory;—Howard, my good fellow, just ride on and expedite dinner: Mr. Hobbs, will you go with Mr. What's-his-name, the steward, and

look over the maps, out-goings, &c.—Now, Mr. Onslow—so Maltravers took the cottage, and a lady with it?—ay, I remember.”

Mr. Onslow (who was in fact that magistrate to whom Ernest had confided his name and committed the search after Alice, and who was really anxious to know if any tidings of the poor girl had ever been ascertained)—here related that history with which the reader is acquainted;—the robbery of the cottage—the disappearance of Alice—the suspicions that connected that disappearance with her ruffian father—the despair and search of Maltravers. He added that Ernest, both before his departure from England and on his return, had written to him to learn if Alice had ever been heard of;—the replies of the magistrate were unsatisfactory. “And do you think, my Lord, that Mr. Maltravers never to this day has ascertained what became of the poor young woman?”

“Why, let me see,—what was her name?”

The magistrate thought a moment, and replied, "Alice Darvil."

"Alice!" exclaimed Vargrave. "Alice!"—aware that such was the Christian name of his uncle's wife, and now almost convinced of the truth of his first vague suspicion.

"You seem to know the name."

"I!—yes,—but it does not belong to any one Maltravers has ever seen. I believe he has never heard of the girl to this hour. Nor you either?"

"No. One little circumstance related to me by Mr. Hobbs—your surveyor's father—gave me some uneasiness. About two years after the young woman disappeared, a girl—of very humble dress and appearance—stopped at the gate of Hobbs' Lodge, and asked earnestly for Mr. Butler. On hearing he was gone, she turned away and was seen no more. It seems that this girl had an infant in her arms—which rather shocked the propriety of Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs. The old gentleman told me the cir-

cumstance a few days after it happened, and I caused inquiry to be made for the stranger; but she could not be discovered. I thought at first this possibly might be the lost Alice; but I learned that, during his stay at the cottage, your friend—despite his error, which we will not stop to excuse,—had exercised so generous and wide a charity amongst the poor in the town and neighbourhood, that it was a more probable supposition of the two, that the girl belonged to some family he had formerly relieved, and her visit was that of a mendicant, not a mistress. Accordingly, after much consideration, I resolved not to mention the circumstance to Mr. Maltravers, when he wrote to me on his return from the Continent. A considerable time had then elapsed since the girl had applied to Mr. Hobbs;—all trace of her was lost—the incident might open wounds that time must have nearly healed—might give false hopes—or, what was worse, occasion a fresh and unfounded remorse at the idea of

Alice's destitution;—it would, in fact, do no good, and might occasion much unnecessary pain. I therefore suppressed all mention of it."

"You did right: and so the poor girl had an infant in her arms?—humph! What sort of looking person was this Alice Darvil?—pretty, of course?"

"I never saw her; and none but the persons employed in the premises knew her by sight—they described her as remarkably lovely."

"Fair and slight,—with blue eyes, I suppose?—those are the orthodox requisites of a heroine."

"Upon my word I forget;—indeed I should never have remembered as much as I do, if the celebrity of Mr. Maltravers, and the consequence of his family in these parts, together with the sight of his own agony—the most painful I ever witnessed—had not served to impress the whole affair very deeply on my mind."

“ Was the girl who appeared at the gate of Hobbs Lodge described to you ? ”

“ No ;—they scarcely observed her countenance, except that her complexion was too fair for a gipsy’s ;—yet, now I think of it, Mrs. Tiddy, who was with her father when he told me the adventure, dwelt particularly on her having (as you so pleasantly conjecture) fair hair and blue eyes. Mrs. Tiddy, being just married, was romantic at that day.”

“ Well, it’s an odd tale.—But life is full of odd tales.—Here we are at the house—it really is a splendid old place ! ”

CHAPTER V.

“ Pendent opera interrupta.”

VIRGIL.

THE history Vargrave had heard, he revolved much when he retired to rest. He could not but allow that there was still little ground for more than conjecture, that Alice Darvil and Alice Lady Vargrave were one and the same person. It might, however, be of great importance to him, to trace this conjecture to certainty. The knowledge of a secret of early sin and degradation in one so pure, so spotless, as Lady Vargrave, might be of immense

service in giving him a power over her, which he could turn to account with Evelyn. How could he best prosecute further inquiry?—By repairing at once to Brook Green—or—the thought struck him—by visiting and “pumping” Mrs. Leslie, the patroness of Mrs. Butler of C****, the friend of Lady Vargrave? It was worth trying the latter—it was little out of his way back to London. His success in picking the brains of Mr. Onslow of a secret, encouraged him in the hope of equal success with Mrs. Leslie. He decided accordingly, and fell asleep to dream of Christmas *battues*, royal visitors—the Cabinet—the Premiership!—Well!—no possession equals the dreams of it!—Sleep on, my Lord!—you would be restless enough if you were to get all you want!

For the next three days, Lord Vargrave was employed in examining the general outlines of the estate, and the result of his survey satisfied him as to the expediency of the purchase. On the third day, he was several miles from

the house when a heavy rain came on. Lord Vargrave was constitutionally hardy, and, not having been much exposed to the visitations of the weather of late years, was not practically aware that, when a man is past forty, he cannot endure with impunity all that falls innocuously on the elasticity of twenty-six. He did not, therefore, heed the rain that drenched him to the skin, and neglected to change his dress till he had finished reading some letters and newspapers which awaited his return at Lisle Court. The consequence of this imprudence was, that, the next morning when he woke, Lord Vargrave found himself, for almost the first time in his life, seriously ill. His head ached violently—cold shiverings shook his frame like an ague; the very strength of the constitution on which the fever had begun to fasten itself, augmented its danger. Lumley—the last man in the world to think of the possibility of dying—fought up against his own sensations—ordered his post-

horses, as his visit of survey was now over, and scarcely even alluded to his indisposition. About an hour before he set off, his letters arrived; one of these informed him that Caroline, accompanied by Evelyn, had already arrived in Paris; the other was from Colonel Legard, respectfully resigning his office, on the ground of an accession of fortune by the sudden death of the Admiral, and his intention to spend the ensuing year in a Continental excursion. This last letter occasioned Vargrave considerable alarm; he had always felt a deep jealousy of the handsome ex-guardsman, and he at once suspected that Legard was about to repair to Paris as his rival. He sighed, and looked round the spacious apartment, and gazed on the wide prospects of grove and turf that extended from the window, and said to himself—"Is another to snatch these from my grasp?" His impatience to visit Mrs. Leslie—to gain ascendancy over Lady Vargrave—to repair to Paris—to scheme—to manœuvre—to

triumph, — accelerated the progress of the disease that was now burning in his veins; and the hand that he held out to Mr. Hobbs as he stepped into his carriage, almost scorched the cold, plump, moist fingers of the surveyor. Before six o'clock in the evening, Lord Vargrave confessed reluctantly to himself, that he was too ill to proceed much further. “Howard,” said he then, breaking a silence that had lasted some hours, “don’t be alarmed—I feel that I am about to have a severe attack;—I shall stop at M——, (naming a large town they were approaching)—I shall send for the best physician the place affords; if I am delirious to-morrow, or unable to give my own orders, have the kindness to send express for Dr. Holland—but don’t leave me, yourself, my good fellow. At my age, it is a hard thing to have no one in the world to care for me in illness—damn affection, when I am well!”

After this strange burst, which very much frightened Mr. Howard, Lumley relapsed into

silence, not broken till he reached M——. The best physician was sent for ; and the next morning, as he had half-foreseen and foretold, Lord Vargrave *was* delirious !

CHAPTER VI.

“ Nought under Heaven so strongly doth allure
The sense of man, and all his mind possess,
As Beauty’s love-bait.”

SPENSER.

LEGARD was—as I have before intimated—a young man of generous and excellent dispositions, though somewhat spoiled by the tenor of his education, and the gay and reckless society which had administered tonics to his vanity and opiates to his intellect. The effect which the beauty—the grace—the innocence of Evelyn—had produced upon him had been most deep and most salutary. It had rendered dissipation tasteless and insipid

—it had made him look more deeply into his own heart, and into the rules of life. Though, partly from the irksomeness of dependance upon an uncle at once generous and ungracious, partly from a diffident and feeling sense of his own inadequate pretensions to the hand of Miss Cameron, and partly from the prior and acknowledged claims of Lord Vargrave—he had accepted, half in despair, the appointment offered to him, he still found it impossible to banish that image which had been the first to engrave upon ardent and fresh affections, an indelible impression. He secretly chafed at the thought, that it was to a fortunate rival that he owed the independence and the station he had acquired, and resolved to seize an early opportunity to free himself from obligations that he deeply regretted he had incurred. At length, he learned that Lord Vargrave had been refused—that Evelyn was free; and, within a few days from that intelligence, the Admiral was

seized with apoplexy—and Legard suddenly found himself possessed, if not of wealth, at least of a competence sufficient to redeem his character as a suitor from the suspicion attached to a fortune-hunter and adventurer. Despite the new prospects opened to him by the death of his uncle, and despite the surly caprice which had mingled with and alloyed the old Admiral's kindness,—Legard was greatly shocked by his death; and his grateful and gentle nature was at first only sensible to grief for the loss he had sustained. But when, at last, recovering from his sorrow, he saw Evelyn disengaged and free, and himself in a position honourably to contest her hand, he could not resist the sweet and passionate hopes that broke upon him. He resigned—as we have seen—his official appointment, and set out for Paris. He reached that city a day or two after the arrival of Lord and Lady Dolimore. He found the former, who had not forgotten the cautions of Vargrave, at first cold and distant;

but, partly from the indolent habit of submitting to Legard's dictates on matters of taste, partly from a liking to his society, and principally from the popular suffrages of fashion, which had always been accorded to Legard, and which were no ways diminished by the news of his accession of fortune—Lord Doltimore, weak and vain, speedily yielded to the influences of his old associate, and Legard became quietly installed as the *enfant de la maison*. Caroline was not in this instance a very faithful ally to Vargrave's views and policy. In his singular *liaison* with Lady Doltimore, the crafty manœuvrer had committed the vulgar fault of intriguers: he had over-refined, and had over-reached himself. At the commencement of their strange and unprincipled intimacy, Vargrave had had, perhaps, no other thought than that of piquing Evelyn, consoling his vanity, amusing his ennui, and indulging rather his propensities as a gallant, than promoting his more serious

objects as a man of the world. By degrees, and especially at Knaresdean, Vargrave himself became deeply entangled, by an affair that he had never before contemplated as more important than a passing diversion:—instead of securing a friend to assist him in his designs on Evelyn, he suddenly found that he had obtained a mistress anxious for his love, and jealous of his homage. With his usual promptitude and self-confidence, he was led at once to deliver himself of all the ill consequences of his rashness—to get rid of Caroline as a mistress—and to retain her as a tool, by marrying her to Lord Doltimore. By the great ascendancy which his character acquired over her, and by her own worldly ambition, he succeeded in inducing her to sacrifice all romance to an union that gave her rank and fortune; and Vargrave then rested satisfied, that the clever wife would not only secure him a permanent power over the political influence and private fortune of the weak

husband, but also abet his designs in securing an alliance equally desirable for himself. Here it was that Vargrave's incapacity to understand the refinements and scruples of a woman's affection and nature, however guilty the one, and however worldly the other, foiled and deceived him. Caroline, though the wife of another, could not contemplate, without anguish, a similar bondage for her lover; and, having something of the better qualities of her sex still left to her, she recoiled from being an accomplice in arts that were to drive the young, inexperienced, and 'guileless creature who called her 'friend,' into the arms of a man who openly avowed the most mercenary motives, and who took gods and men to witness that his heart was sacred to another. Only in Vargrave's presence were these scruples overmastered; but the moment he was gone they returned in full force: she had yielded, from positive fear, to his commands that she should convey Evelyn to Paris; but

she trembled to think of the vague hints and dark menaces that Vargrave had let fall as to ulterior proceedings, and was distracted at the thought of being implicated in some villainous or rash design. When, therefore, the man whose rivalry Vargrave most feared, was almost established at her house, she made but a feeble resistance: she thought that, if Legard should become a welcome and accepted suitor before Lumley arrived, the latter would be forced to forego whatever hopes he yet cherished, and that she should be delivered from a dilemma, the prospect of which daunted and appalled her. Added to this, Caroline was now, alas! sensible that a fool is not so easily governed—her resistance to an intimacy with Legard would have been of little avail: Doltimore, in these matters, had an obstinate will of his own; and, whatever might once have been Caroline's influence over her liege, certain it is, that such influence had been greatly impaired of late by the indulgence of a temper,

always irritable, and now daily more soured by regret, remorse, contempt for her husband,—and the melancholy discovery, that fortune, youth, beauty, and station, are no talismans against misery.

It was the gayest season of Paris ; and, to escape from herself, Caroline plunged eagerly into the vortex of its dissipations. If Doltimore's heart was disappointed, his vanity was pleased at the admiration Caroline excited ; and he himself was of an age and temper to share in the pursuits and amusements of his wife. Into these gaieties, new to their fascination, dazzled by their splendour, the young Evelyn entered, with her hostess ; and ever by her side was the unequalled form of Legard. Each of them in the bloom of youth—each of them at once formed to please, and to be pleased by, that fair Armida which we call The World—there was, necessarily, a certain congeniality in their views and sentiments—their occupations and their objects ;—nor was

there, in all that brilliant city, one more calculated to captivate the eye and fancy, than George Legard. But still, to a certain degree, diffident and fearful, Legard never yet spoke of love; nor did their intimacy, at this time, ripen to that point in which Evelyn could have asked herself if there were danger in the society of Legard, or serious meaning in his obvious admiration. Whether that melancholy, to which Lady Vargrave had alluded in her correspondence with Lumley, were occasioned by thoughts connected with Maltravers, or unacknowledged recollections of Legard, it remains for the acute reader himself to ascertain.

The Doltimores had been about three weeks in Paris; and, for a fortnight of that time, Legard had been their constant guest, and half the inmate of their hotel;—when, on that night which has been commemorated in our last Book, Maltravers suddenly once more beheld the face of Evelyn, and in the same hour.

learned that she was free: he quitted Valerie's box:—with a burning pulse and a beating heart, joy, and surprise, and hope, sparkling in his eyes, and brightening his whole aspect, he hastened to Evelyn's side.

It was at this time that Legard, who sate behind Miss Cameron, unconscious of the approach of a rival, happened, by one of those chances which occur in conversation, to mention the name of Maltravers. He asked Evelyn if she had yet met him?

“What! is he then in Paris?” asked Evelyn, quickly. “I heard, indeed,” she continued, “that he left Burleigh for Paris, but imagined he had gone on to Italy.”

“No, he is still here; but he goes, I believe, little into the society Lady Doktimore chiefly visits. Is he one of your favourites, Miss Cameron?”

There was a slight increase of colour in Evelyn's beautiful cheek, as she answered—

"Is it possible not to admire and be interested in one so gifted?"

"He has certainly noble and fine qualities," returned Legard; "but I cannot feel at ease with him; a coldness—a hauteur—a measured distance of manner—seem to forbid even esteem. Yet *I* ought not to say so," he added, with a pang of self-reproach.

"No, indeed, you ought not to say so," said Evelyn, shaking her head with a pretty affectation of anger, "for I know that you pretend to like what I like, and admire what I admire; and I am an enthusiast in all that relates to Mr. Maltravers!"

"I know that I would wish to see all things in life through Miss Cameron's eyes," whispered Legard, softly; and this was the most meaning speech he had ever yet made.

Evelyn turned away, and seemed absorbed in the opera; and at that instant the door of the box opened, and Maltravers entered.

In her open, undisguised, youthful delight, at seeing him again, Maltravers felt indeed, "as if Paradise were opened in her face." In his own agitated emotions, he scarcely noticed that Legard had risen, and resigned his seat to him: he availed himself of the civility, greeted his old acquaintance with a smile and bow, and in a few minutes he was in deep converse with Evelyn.

Never had he so successfully exerted the singular, the master-fascination that he could command at will, the more powerful, from its contrast to his ordinary coldness: in the very expression of his eyes—the very tone of his voice—there was that, in his happier moments, in Maltravers, which irresistibly interested and absorbed your attention; he could make you forget everything but himself, and the rich, easy, yet earnest, eloquence which gave colour to his language, and melody to his voice. In that hour of renewed intercourse with one who had at first awakened, if not her heart, at least

her imagination and her deeper thoughts, certain it is, that even Legard was not missed. As she smiled and listened, Evelyn dreamt not of the anguish she inflicted. Leaning against the back of the box, Legard surveyed the absorbed attention of Evelyn, the adoring eyes of Maltravers, with that utter and crushing wretchedness, which no passion but jealousy, and that only while it is yet a virgin agony, can bestow ! He had never before even dreamt of rivalry in such a quarter ; but there was that ineffable instinct, which lovers have, and which so seldom errs, that told him at once, that in Maltravers was the greatest obstacle and peril his passion could encounter. He waited in hopes that Evelyn would take the occasion to turn to him at least—when the fourth act closed. She did not ; and, unable to constrain his emotions, and reply to the *fade* remarks of Lord Doltimore, he abruptly quitted the box.

When the opera was over, Maltravers of-

ferred his arm to Evelyn ;—she accepted it, and then she looked round for Legard. He was gone—and she felt pained and sad—she scarce knew why.

END OF BOOK VII. AND VOL. II.

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